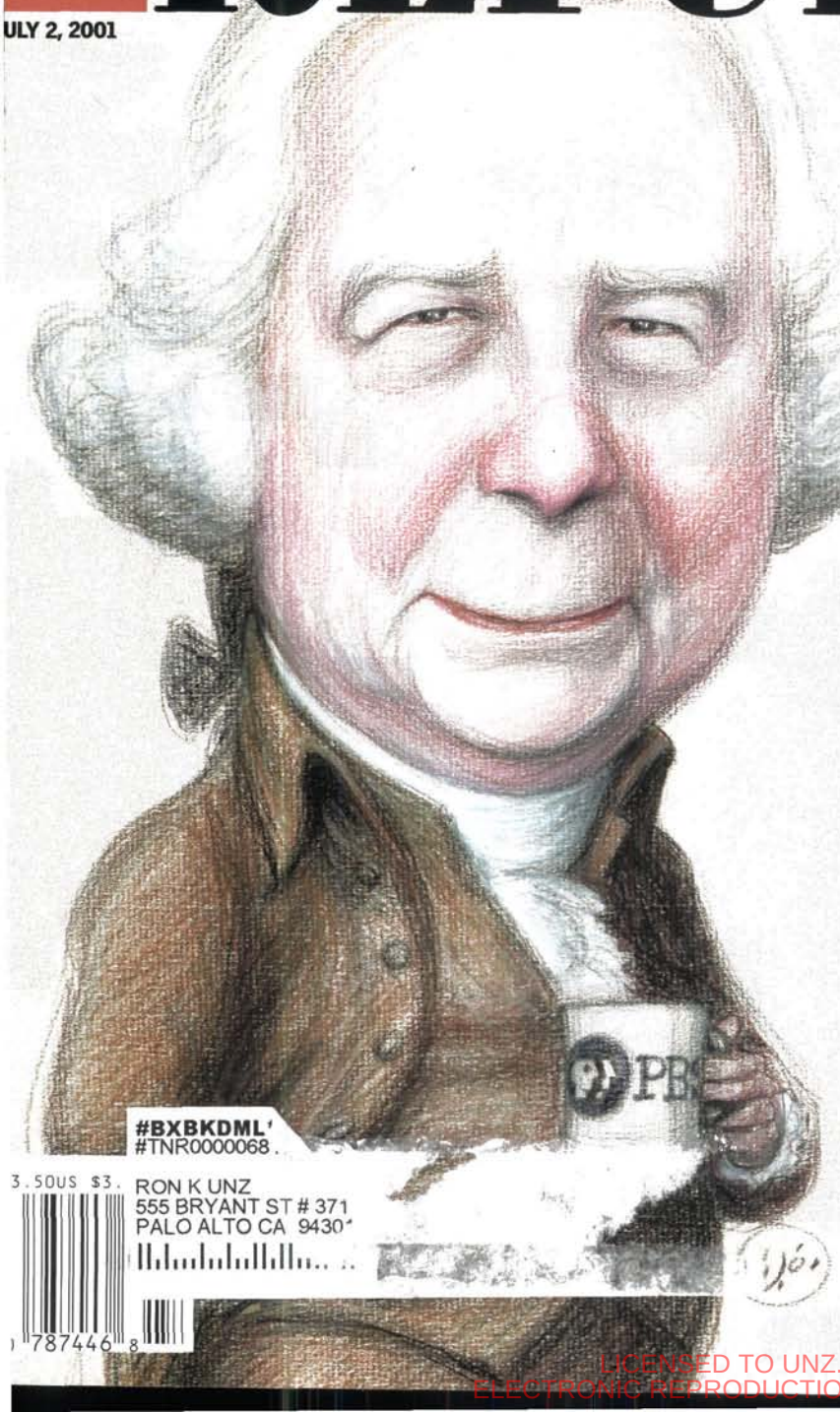
Mike Bloomberg, Control Freak MICHELLE COTTLE

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Who Is Lincoln Chafee?
MICHAEL CROWLEY

What Is an Opera?
PHILIP GOSSETT

ULY 2, 2001



David McCullough, John Adams, *and the* Fall of Popular History

By SEAN WILENTZ

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

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Care package

TO THE EDITORS:

As a member of the private attending staff at Beth Israel (now Beth Israel Deaconess) since 1974, I would like to compliment Jonathan Cohn on his excellent and accurate summary of the past 26 years of my professional life as it has intersected with this hospital ("Sick," May 28). The day-to-day changes are minute; but, over time, they have produced a downward slide in the quality of life of those who work there, as well as that of the patients we care for. Hospital rounds, which often used to be the best part of the day, have turned into a chore from which one can derive little pleasure. Although the merger of Beth Israel with New England Deaconess is responsible for much of the current trouble, the pressures that forced the merger are really the culprits. Those who have the extraordinarily difficult task of keeping us afloat have been so distracted by the many outside pressures so well-described by Cohn that they seem to have forgotten that the primary task of this hospital, like any other, is to provide an environment that allows us and our colleagues in nursing to care for the sick.

STEPHEN B. SALTZ, M.D.
Senior Attending Physician
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
Brookline, Massachusetts

Unsettling

TO THE EDITORS:

While Yossi Klein Halevi was attacking Peace Now's campaign for a freeze on settlement construction ("Bank Shot," May 28), yet another poll showed that 62 percent of Israelis disagree with him and would exchange such a freeze for a cease-fire. Israelis clearly recognize the damage that settlements inflict on our national interests, and reject the blind approach that settlers take toward others who live here. Since, as Halevi states, most of the 6,000 settlement apartments remain unsold, why can't Israel stop further construction until a real need arises? If the first priority of the settlers is to end terrorism, why don't they try a construction freeze? Simply put, the settlers' opposition to a building freeze is rooted in their ideology. After all, they went to the occupied territories not to answer Palestinian violence but to deprive Palestinians of their right to self-determination.

Peace Now first demonstrated against settlement construction in 1979 because we have always believed settlements are a major obstacle to peace. Similarly, ever

since Oslo—not just since the recent intifada—Palestinians have considered settlement expansion the main proof of Israel's bad faith, making it impossible to create a Palestinian state.

MORDECHAI BAR-ON
Peace Now
Jerusalem, Israel

Excuse my French

TO THE EDITORS:

"Error of Commission" (May 21) leaves out one key component in the ouster of the United States from the U.N. Human Rights Commission: the role of France. THE NEW REPUBLIC refers to "European governments" as if they all acted alike. In fact, France sets the tone and is deterred by Germany from its most egregious anti-American plans (a fact that is mostly unpublicized). Among Western countries, France was the winner of the balloting for the commission: It got 52 votes, with Austria and Sweden second and third. This means that all those human rights violators like Cuba, Libya, Sudan, and so on voted for France—evidence of how France courts and appeases them while the United States champions human rights issues that often target France's Third World allies. It's important for Americans to understand that, progress toward a European Union notwithstanding, there remain important differences in the policies of member countries. Among these are French anti-Americanism, German loyalty to the Atlantic alliance, and Britain's traditional friendship with and support for America.

ROBERT H. GOLDMANN
New York, New York

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Please address letters to Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 (letters may also be sent electronically to tnr@aol.com). All letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be fewer than 200 words. Letters may be edited for space and clarity. Please do not send letters via fax.

Independent document

TO THE EDITORS:

In his argument for the medicinal and recreational use of marijuana ("Enjoy," May 28), Andrew Sullivan enlists the support of the Constitution, which, he says, protects the pursuit of happiness. I think he means to invoke the Declaration of Independence. An argument favoring the protection of marijuana use might be based on the Constitution's promised promotion of the "general welfare," but that would be a different editorial.

STEVEN WALT
Charlottesville, Virginia

Shelf life

TO THE EDITORS:

While I agreed with Alexander Star's opinion that Nicholson Baker is "incapable of considering what is worth saving and what is not," it was with increasing frustration and dismay that I read his comments about microfilm ("The Paper Pusher," May 28). Preservation-quality microfilming is being used in libraries and archives around the world to extend the useful life of research materials. It is neither a "vogue of past decades" nor unreliable as a preservation and access medium. Today's properly created, processed, and stored polyester-based microfilm reels will provide future generations of scholars with access to materials long after using the originals would result in damage.

Microfilm has always been relatively unpopular. But for the libraries attempting to provide access to materials printed on deteriorating paper, confronted with chronic space shortages and budget shortfalls throughout much of the past century, popularity wasn't the most pressing item on the agenda. Nor have I read anywhere that leafing through volumes of wood-pulp paper has become a major source of entertainment revenue.

Star's comments only further the already distorted view of preservation microfilming that Baker has gone to great lengths to create.

WALTER CYBULSKI
Preservation Librarian
Olney, Maryland

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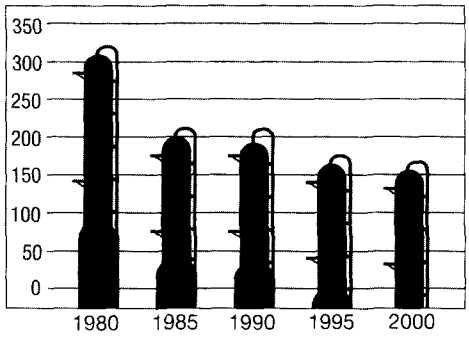
Worried drivers

Consumers continue to be concerned about gasoline prices and their effects on summer driving, commuting and vacations. America is a driving nation, and people want to know what's going on.

Crude oil prices have a major impact on gasoline costs, but so do other elements:

In 1983, yearly gasoline demand was around 100 billion gallons, about the same as in 1973. But beginning in the mid-1980s, demand began to grow again by 1 to 2 percent each year. **By last year Americans were using 130 billion gallons, 30 percent more than in 1983.**

Decline in Number of U.S. Refineries



Source: National Petroleum Council

While demand has been growing, refining capacity has been stretched to its limit. As shown in the chart, **the number of U.S. refineries has been declining for decades**. This is due to low profitability and investments required to meet regulations. Gasoline production capacity has grown, but only through the gradual expansion and improvement of more-efficient refineries.

The U.S. oil industry invested nearly $50 billion in refineries in the 1990s, including about $20 billion to meet stringent environmental standards. Despite these efforts, **further refinery expansion and upgrading are becoming more difficult and less economic** in the face of local opposition and regulatory constraints.

Adding to the challenges is that for a number of years refiners will have their hands full gearing up to produce ultra-low-sulfur fuels required by new environmental rules.

With capacity so tight, most refineries produce as much fuel as they can, shutting down only for needed repairs and maintenance. And the gasoline we now produce is more difficult to make. In addition to the familiar regular, special and premium, **we make many different gasoline grades to meet environmental specifications**, often for portions of states or even individual cities.

With the proliferation of new gasoline grades, it's become harder each year to move the right kind of gasoline to the right market. Like rush-hour traffic, one glitch can slow down the whole system.

So with growing demand and a strained manufacturing and logistics system, upward price pressures will recur unless gasoline supply is allowed greater flexibility and growth.

Over time, prices will both rise and fall in response to what happens in the fuels market and to crude oil prices. Meanwhile, we're in business for the long term, and **our success depends on meeting the gasoline needs of our customers and providing quality products and services at reasonable prices**.

That's one reason we would like to see some policy changes that would help remove manufacturing and logistics constraints, thereby improving the efficiency of existing facilities and reducing the likelihood of supply problems and price spikes.

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Home Base

AN ALMOST REMARKABLE piece ran in last Sunday's *Washington Post*. I say "almost" because the *Post* has run articles before that reflect mild black hostility to whites. But it is still rare for even the *Post* or *The New York Times* to run articles that openly defend racial separatism as a goal in itself.

The article, by *Post* staffer Natalie Hopkinson, is a tale of how she and her husband moved to D.C. and bought an expensive Victorian house in the District's Bloomingdale section. Her intent was not merely to live in the District but to prevent white people from buying the house. In her words, "[T]he fact that we had emerged victorious from a six-month battle at the height of the District real estate wars—skirmishes in which we were often the lone black faces vying for homes in historically black neighborhoods—said something else: 'We damn sure are not about to let white folks buy up all the property in D.C.'"

Racial hostility to non-blacks pervades the entire piece. Hopkinson and her husband grew up in largely white middle-class neighborhoods and loathed the experience. They were, she says, subjected to bigotry. Her response is to return to a predominantly black city and keep it as segregated as she can: "There is a real sense among black Washingtonians that the city is slipping away from us. A few months ago, as I left a take-out on Georgia Avenue, a gentleman passed me a flyer. It invited me to a community meeting where residents planned to debate the question, 'Is the Chocolate City turning Vanilla?' I pocketed the flyer, but didn't bother going to the meeting. I already knew the answer: Not if I have anything to say about it."

In some ways, Hopkinson's commitment to return to the inner city—in contrast to the countless members of the black (and white) middle-class who have abandoned it—is admirable. She also sees no reason why white residents cannot also do their part: "Many whites want to help out, too, and their privileged racial status can only improve the city's prospects. But this is the Chocolate City. It's our responsibility as black people to return to these historically black communities that are finally rebounding." Notice that the whites do not bring their commitment, talent, or understanding. Their only asset is their "privileged racial status."

This is not another battle about gentrification. Hopkinson is not a longtime, poor black resident being squeezed out by higher rents. She's an affluent member of the black middle class and, like many bourgeois blacks, seems to view her success as reason to be more racially bitter, not less. She is a newcomer to a city she defines as her own solely because of the color of her skin. In her eyes, white residents of the Chocolate City, even if they have lived here all their lives, are not as authentic as she.

Is this racism? The *Post* doesn't think so. But would the *Post* ever publish a piece by a white man who wanted to move back to, say, Cincinnati because it was once a predominantly white city, and who believed he had more right to be there than black newcomers and residents? Of course not. Just imagine the statement "There is a real sense among white Washingtonians that the city is slipping away from us" appearing in the *Post*. Maybe in a Ku Klux Klan newsletter.

But the distinctions between right-wing racists and left-wing racists are increasingly hard to discern. The left now argues that, since racism is not a personal moral choice but a structural oppression, blacks de facto cannot be racists. Liberals now argue that, although some element of choice is involved in a racist statement or act, minorities—especially those who have suffered in the past—should have more leeway than whites in being bigots. Fewer and fewer members of the American intelligentsia still believe what liberals once held sacred—that there is never any excuse for shunning or condemning anyone because of his or her race. Hardly anybody still maintains that allowing blacks to be more racist than whites is in itself racist because it robs individual blacks of the expectation that they can be as moral as anyone else.

But Hopkinson's case is interesting because it presents the issue in extreme form. She is wealthy; she grew up in integrated neighborhoods; she has a stellar education; she is a newcomer to the city; and yet she still claims racial privilege in D.C. over whites, Latinos, Asians, and any others with the nerve to live and work in a city that desperately needs all the influx it can get.

You could argue, I suppose, that protecting a neighborhood's culture is not the same thing as racism. Hopkinson, however, is new to her neighborhood. She's not defending something that is already hers. She is staking a claim—on purely racial grounds—to a culture she has decided to embrace. In some ways, this is human. You can see why some Hasidic neighborhoods want to keep out gentiles to protect their culture; you can see why some gay neighborhoods fret about becoming straight yuppie paradises (once all the town houses have been fixed up). But the line between a legitimate desire to defend a way of life and an ugly aversion to living among people who are different is a crucial one.

It should be possible, for example, to retain the character of a predominantly black neighborhood while incorporating increasing numbers of whites, Latinos, and Asians. What's to stop newcomers from getting to know local manners, food, and neighborhood events, regardless of their ethnicity? One of the joys of my mixed neighborhood in D.C., for example, is the local Catholic church, St. Augustine's. Predominantly black, its liturgy is a unique blend of African American spirituality, Catholic ritual, and Gospel music. I may be a white gay Catholic, but no one bats an eyelid if I show up in the pews. Why shouldn't, equally, my black neighbors appreciate the Korean food my local convenience store offers? Why shouldn't my straight friends have a beer every now and again at a gay bar? My local park, named after Malcolm X, hosts Salvadoran soccer games on weekday evenings. This is not, of course, what Malcolm X had in mind, but it's certainly close to the vision of Martin Luther King Jr.

Does this threaten the identity of the Chocolate City? Only if you identify a city on purely racial grounds. Resisting an attempt to wipe out or smother an entire culture is not the same as resisting people purely because of their superficial differences. That's why parochial Hasidim who shun outsiders are indeed offensive to liberal values. Ditto for white-ethnic neighborhoods where black people are subtly and not-so-subtly kept out. And ditto for black neighborhoods that make white interlopers feel unwelcome not because the newcomers are wealthy or racist but simply because they are white. The freedom of association to keep to one's own should be legal, as long as the government doesn't enforce it. But in a liberal culture, such separatism should be seen for what it is: an assertion that what we have in common as citizens and as human beings is less important than what separates us as members of racial, ethnic, or other groups. This, in many ways, is still the fault line in our current cultural politics. It hasn't gone away. In fact, the separatists' arguments are gaining force all the time—abetted by white liberals who should know better and who are too cowardly and guilt-ridden to take this evil on.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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Soul Man

THERE IS NOTHING that is more incomprehensible in contemporary American life than impersonality. Everything is now psychologized, sentimentalized, dramatized, and publicized; and reduced to feeling and the sharing of feeling, to personal testimonies and personal relationships and personal journeys. The detached exercise of reason, which requires for its effectiveness a containment of emotion, is regarded as a kind of alienation. In moist America, chilly is cruel. Last week, when the president of the United States met the president of Russia for the first time, we learned that the moistness of America extends also to its practice of diplomacy.

Here is some of what George W. Bush had to say about Vladimir Putin after 100 minutes of translated conversation at a castle in Brdo: "He's an honest, straightforward man who loves his country. He loves his family. We share a lot of values.... I looked the man in the eye. I found him to be very straightforward and trustworthy. We had a very good dialogue. I was able to get a sense of his soul.... The president is a history major and so am I.... Can I trust him? And I can...." The president sees into the human heart.

Gush, gush, gush: Bush has mistaken big power summits for daytime television. To be sure, he was doing what he was instructed to do. The president's mission on his trip to Europe was to reassure a skeptical universe about his ability to represent himself, not to mention the interests of the United States, on the world stage. How to accomplish this? Well, Bush has only a single proven strength: personality. To do well he gets personal, on the campaign trail and everywhere else. When everything fails, he repairs to his likability. And so he turned it on in Slovenia, and the president of Russia seemed to like him quite a lot. Before long Putin will appear in Crawford, Texas, where he will be presented with his very own pair of Luccheses, and he will like them a lot, too.

We have been here before, and very recently. The president's father made a fetish out of his fond regard of Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s, and for a while was misled by it; and if there was anything that clouded the American perception of Russia during the Clinton years, it was the fervent personal relationship between the president of the United States and the president of Russia. During the final farcical years of Boris Yeltsin's rule, Bill Clinton and Strobe Talbott simplified our Russia policy into the dogmatic and treacly support of one man, whose increasing inability to govern they chose to witness passively, as if there were no alternatives in Russian politics. Meanwhile Russian democracy was turning into Russian kleptocracy, and the consequent instability prepared the ground for the popular election of a polite autocrat such as Vladimir Putin.

Then there is the matter of Bush's competence as a judge of human souls. For it is not at all obvious that Putin is likable. He is not exactly Jeffersonian. He is the slaughterer of Grozny. He is the man who presided over the takeover of his country's only independent television station, and sells weapons to Iran, and entertains the possibility of historic alliances between Russia and China. Putin, trustworthy? He was trained to be untrustworthy. In his temperament and in his policies, Bush's new buddy is the perfect incarnation of the KGB, where he worked for decades. (In a press conference after his meeting with Bush, Putin bragged about his KGB service, and compared himself to the president's father, who "was not working in a laundry, he was working at the CIA.") In his time as president of Russia, Putin has demonstrated mainly a streak of brutality and a knack for survival. *There* is Putin's "soul."

Most importantly, what do the emotional satisfactions of summits have to do with strategic realities? Surely the calculation of American interests, and the protection of those interests, do not require feats of intuition or bonding. They require feats of intelligence; and an intelligent review of America's interests in its dealings with Russia reveals that a chilly relationship may be the truest relationship. For there are deep differences between the two countries. They do not disagree merely about ballistic missile defense, though Bush seems to care mainly about this disagreement. The expansion of NATO, human rights, nuclear proliferation, the Western presence in the Balkans, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: those are only a few of the issues that W.'s country and Vlad's country do not see similarly. What is the point, exactly, of pretending to the American public, and to the Russian public, that displays of affection at the highest level, or even genuine affection at the highest level, will elide or erase those disagreements? Bush, of all people, should understand the advantage of keeping expectations low.

Surtout pas de zèle: that was Talleyrand's credo as a diplomat. But Brdo last week was *zèle* city. So enjoy the good feelings. As any history major knows, they will not last long. ■

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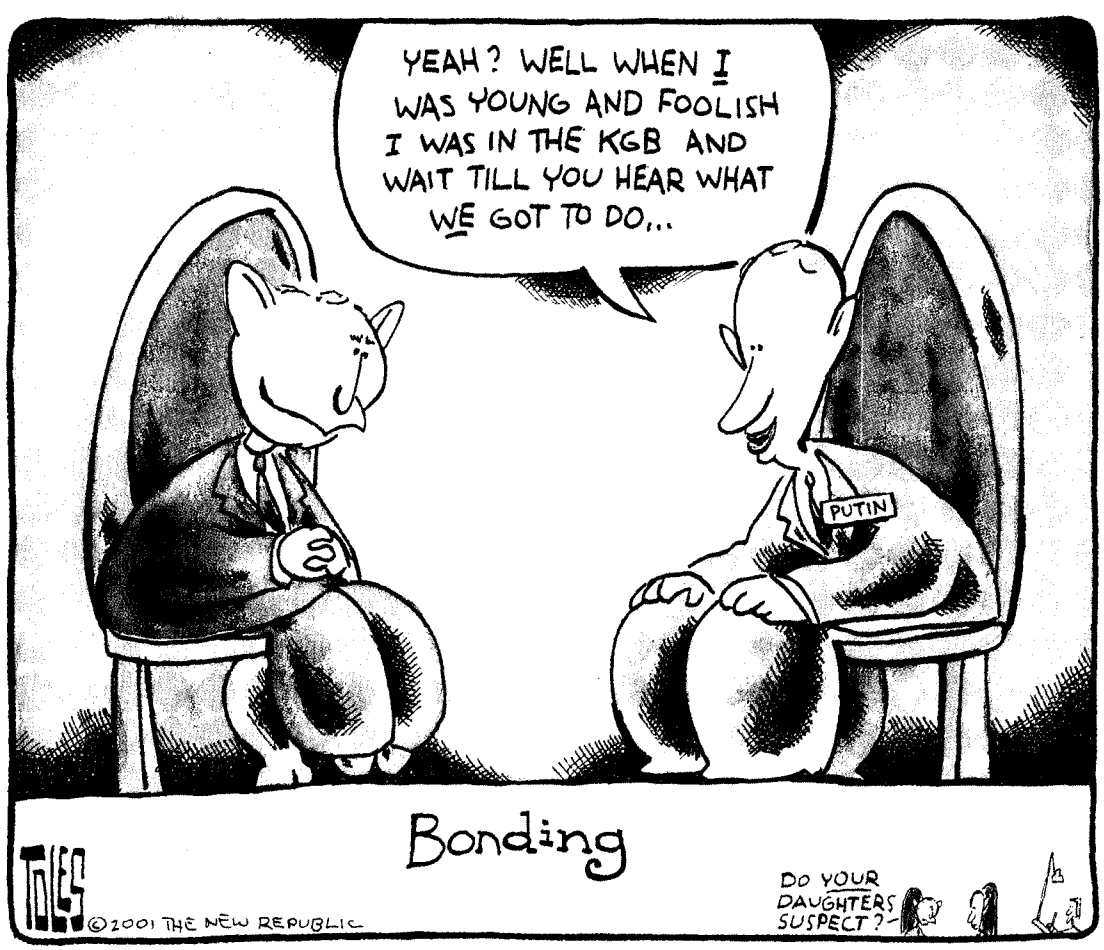
NOTEBOOK

MAIL FRAUD: If you pay income taxes, sometime in the next few weeks you'll receive a letter touting the recently passed tax cut: "We are pleased to inform you that the United States Congress passed—and President George W. Bush signed into law—the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001." The letter will further inform you that, thanks to this law, a rebate check (up to $300 for individuals, $600 for couples) is in the mail. ("You will be receiving a check," the letter states. "You need to take no additional steps.") Agitprop paid for by the Republican National Committee? No, agitprop paid for by you—the mailing is costing the IRS more than $20 million in postage. Good-government groups like the Center for Responsive Politics are up in arms at this use of a government agency for partisan ends. But that's only the beginning of the letter's dishonesty. After all, the president *opposed* the rebate tooth and nail when Democrats first proposed it. "Tax relief that gets yanked away next year is not such good news," Bush told a group of businessmen in March. Republican talking points, loyally recited by Oklahoma Senator Don Nickles and columnist Robert Novak, compared the rebate to an airplane randomly dropping checks over the countryside. Indeed, it was only after the tax plan looked as if it could unravel that the White House agreed to the rebate to secure moderate votes. Next up, a helpful government alert about how the White House is enabling you to sue your HMO.

COMPANY MAN: The consensus in Washington is that Bush adviser Karl Rove's meetings with companies in which he held a large financial interest constitute merely the appearance of impropriety. But some pretty damning facts have come to light. Rove, who owned more than $100,000 in Intel stock, met with company executives seeking White House approval for a merger in which Intel had a large financial stake. The administration's defense—that Rove told the executives he had no role in the decision—is directly contradicted by one of the meeting's participants. Another participant sent the White House a thank-you note, singling out Rove's "hard work" on this issue. Nor is Intel an isolated case. Rove has also discussed energy policy with the CEO of Enron. Enron, of course, has a strong interest in Bush's energy plan, and Rove had a strong interest in Enron—again, more than $100,000 worth of stock. So why has this ranked as such a minor scandal? Because nobody thinks Rove's financial interests affected his judgment. As *Newsweek*, which reported many of these details, asserted, "Even Rove's harshest critics don't claim he has used his power to enrich himself." Why not? After all, it's not as if Rove has a reputation for unimpeachable honesty. Rather, it's because of Rove's politics. If a Clinton adviser—say, George Stephanopoulos—had done the same things as Rove, he would have been suspected of trying to line his pockets. The presumption would be that because of the ideological distance between his perspective and that of Intel or Enron, only naked self-interest could explain such coziness. But in Rove's case, there's no such presumption. His defense—though no one will come out and say it—hinges on the assumption that he would never recommend any action that displeases a major corporation, whether or not he had a financial stake in it. So there's no scandal. Or, at least, no more than usual.

A BRIGHT SHINING LIE: Only a few weeks ago, revelations about former Senator Bob Kerrey's record in


YEAH? WELL WHEN I WAS YOUNG AND FOOLISH I WAS IN THE KGB AND WAIT TILL YOU HEAR WHAT WE GOT TO DO...
PUTIN
Bonding
TOLES
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DO YOUR DAUGHTERS SUSPECT?

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Vietnam prompted national soul-searching about war and memory. Well, here we go again—only this time the dishonesty is even more glaring, and the apologia is even more absurd. It seems Joseph Ellis, a history professor at Mount Holyoke College and the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Founding Fathers: The Revolutionary Generation*, had quite a Vietnam War record himself. Or at least he convinced his students and colleagues he did. In his class, "The Literature of Vietnam," Ellis regularly recounted his experiences as a platoon leader with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam and his service on the staff of General William Westmoreland, the U.S. commander in Vietnam. The only problem, as *The Boston Globe* reported on June 18, is that Ellis never set foot in Vietnam. Nor, as Mount Holyoke's Forrest Gump liked to boast, did he play a significant role in either the civil rights movement or the anti-war movement. But this didn't dissuade Joanne V. Creighton, Mount Holyoke's president, from defending Ellis's "great integrity, honesty, and honor" and publicly dismissing the relevance of his classroom prevarications. "We at the college do not know what public interest the *Globe* is trying to serve through a story of this nature," Creighton added. The interest, if we may clarify, is historical truth—a commodity whose importance Ellis, as one of the nation's most visible historians, is supposed to cherish. And which the administration of Mount Holyoke evidently does not.

FROM THE ARCHIVES: "[E]veryone knows the status quo. Some unfortunate individual becomes injured, files a lawsuit and seeks compensation in court, wins, and before he or she is able to use the money to pay medical bills or put his or her life back together, the lawyers get paid. The fact is that while the injured party is still suffering and trying to make better his or her lot in life, the lawyers get paid first and foremost. They often receive large contingency fees for settling a case with a minimum amount of effort."—Arizona Senator John McCain, speaking against the Health Security Act, August 17, 1994

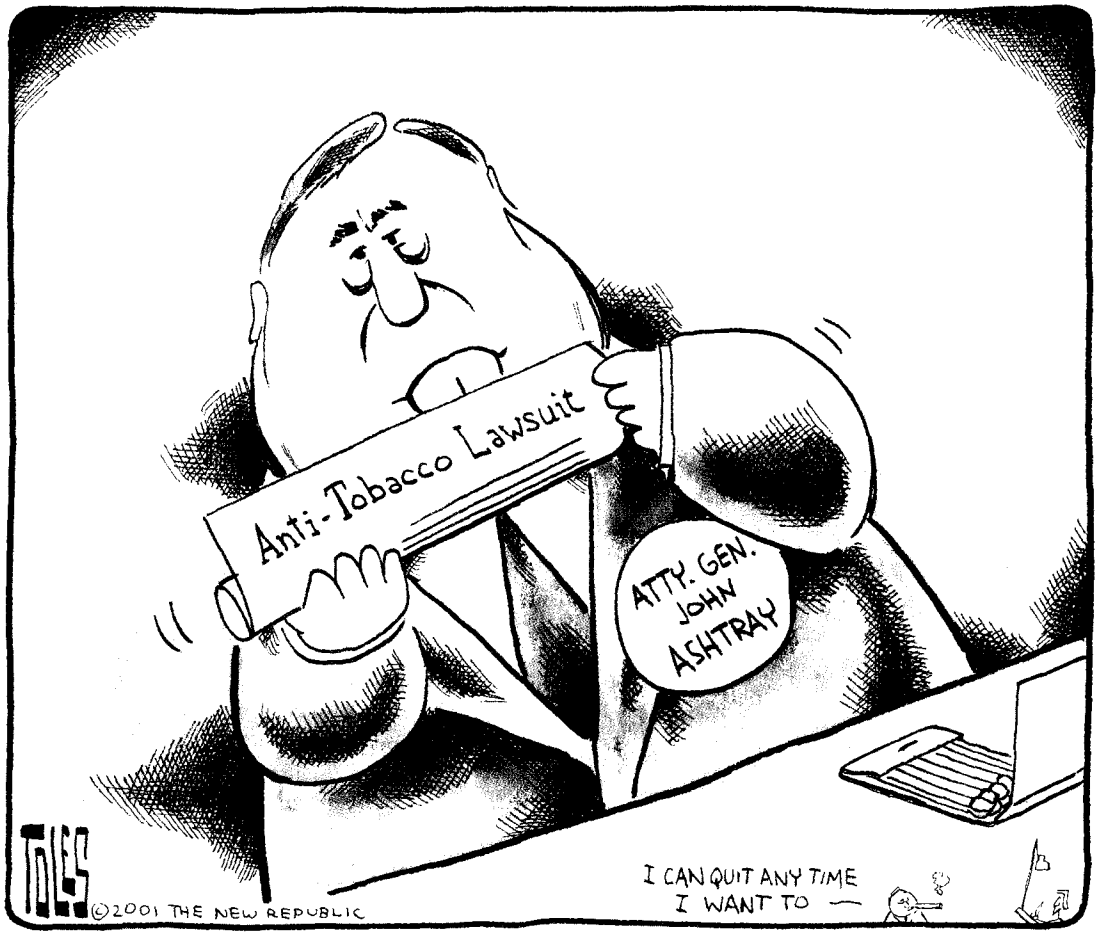
THIS TIME: "In a blatant display of pandering, Al Gore changed his position on moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. Al Gore is once again showing that he can't be counted on to take a principled stand."—Bush campaign spokesman Dan Bartlett, October 30, 2000

"President Bush has backed off a campaign pledge to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and will keep it in Tel Aviv, at least for now."—Associated Press, June 12, 2001

ABANDON SHIP: "The ship is a fully equipped professional out-treatment room. All of you can see, it fits all of the requirements to be able to treat—if any complication would arise, to treat that according to Dutch professional standards, and these are very high."—Dr. Rebecca Gomperts of the Women on Waves abortion boat, "Good Morning America," June 15

"We would never have been prepared or able to give concrete help to 120 women."—Gomperts, *Sunday Telegraph*, June 17

SEND THIS MAN TO SPIN SCHOOL: "The congressman has come forward and said they were good friends—as he is with many interns."—Joseph W. Cotchett, attorney for California Representative Gary Condit, who has refused to confirm or deny an alleged affair with missing intern Chandra Levy ■



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Why Europe needs to see America as cruel.

Euro Cheek

By Peter Beinart

George W. Bush's trip to Europe last week offered America's highbrow press something delicious: a big, new foreign policy idea. Europe and the United States, we were told over and over, are drifting apart because of a conflict over values. During the cold war, Europe resented America for what it did; today, Europe resents America for what it believes. Global warming, missile defense, the death penalty, economic policy—each dispute further illustrated this transatlantic cultural gulf.

A clash of civilizations! What fun. Too bad it probably isn't true. For starters, Europe's increasingly integrated elite may feel alienated from American values, but the Continent's McDonald's-eating unwashed seem considerably less hostile. As The New Republic's Notebook explained last week, the death penalty—which Europeans supposedly see as a sign of American barbarism—polls between 40 percent and 60 percent popular support in Britain, Italy, France, and Sweden. As Philippe Mechet, director general of the French polling firm Sofres, recently told *Time* magazine, "The elites, as reflected in the media, make a big issue of this, but public opinion does not feel as strongly about it." Europeans are also supposedly outraged by Bush's opposition to the Kyoto global-warming treaty—but, with the exception of Romania, no European parliament has ratified it either.

Europeans, we were further informed, are furious about the Americanization of their cultures and economies. But the evidence for that is a little thin as well. After all, if American culture weren't so popular with the European public, European elites wouldn't be so worried about it. And on economic policy, it's not as if European elections over the last decade have witnessed great rejections of American-style deregulation. To the contrary, European social democratic parties have slowly followed the path forged by Bill Clinton's Democrats and Tony Blair's New Labourites—toward less state intervention in the economy. In Germany, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has proposed free-market reforms that would have made his SPD predecessors gasp. It's not the anti-globalization (read: anti-Americanization) movement that has dominated European politics in recent years; it's the relatively pro-American "Third Way."

What many are interpreting as a transatlantic cultural divide may simply be a dysfunctional relationship between the American and European presses. The European press has long been to the left of the European public. During the cold war, when socialism was still politically viable, European journalists could express that leftism ideologically. But today, with socialism gone, European journalists have turned to the language of cultural nationalism. Instead of framing global warming, missile defense, and capital punishment as pitting left versus right, they depict them as pitting France (or Germany or Italy) versus the United States. And since Europe's intellectual elite increasingly conceives of its identity as not simply French, German, or Italian, but European, it frames political conflicts as pitting compassionate European values against Darwinian American ones.

Why does the American press buy this dichotomy? Because the European press is where American correspondents in Europe get a lot of their information. And because, ever since George W. became president, American journalists—who generally lean left—have been feeling pretty alienated from American culture as well. The result is a self-righteous European media and a self-flagellating American one speaking to each other in a kind of echo chamber.

All this isn't to suggest there are no "values" differences between the United States and Europe. It is to suggest that the current framework for thinking about those differences—compassionate Europe versus heartless America—is wrong. Why, for instance, has capital punishment become such a prominent issue for European elites in the last few years? After all, the United States has been executing people for 25 years now. My suspicion is that European elites focus on the death penalty because it incarnates the values they associate with the American economy. For highbrow Europeans, America's primary offense in the era of globalization is unregulated capitalism, which they consider brutal, inhumane, and unjust to the poor and to minorities. But the economic debate is complicated, and, besides, Europe's alternative economic model hasn't been faring so well. So focusing on the death penalty offers a much more graphic way of making the same point.

On the death penalty itself, European moralists are right. But making the death penalty a metaphor for America is wrong. Economically America may have deep inequities, but wages for the poor have been rising over the past several years, something that can't be said for the many European countries where large chunks of the working class remain chronically unemployed.

And even on social policy, the stereotype of America as dynamic but heartless and Europe as inefficient but compassionate doesn't hold up. Consider immigration. The United States takes in about twice as many immigrants as do all the European nations combined. That's largely because, after a brief scare with Pat Buchanan and Pete Wilson in the mid-'90s, nativism has collapsed as a political force in America. But in Europe, with its supposedly "softer" values, it is sharply on the rise. In fact, hostility to immigrants increasingly defines the European right. In Italy, recently elected Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi pledged in his campaign to essentially seal Italy's borders, even calling on the Italian police to shoot at boats of illegal immigrants trying to reach Italian shores. In Britain, Tory candidate William Hague

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TNR editor Peter Beinart's weekly column, "Punditry," can be read in The New Republic Online (*www.thenewrepublic.com*).

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How Bad Is the Education Bill?

Chester E. Finn Jr. is a distinguished visiting ellow, Hoover Institution; nember, Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 lucation; and president, Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

As the Senate completes its blunting of President Bush's once-bold plan to overhaul the federal role in elementary-secondary education, most of the final decisions await a House-Senate conference committee.

But the measure's outlines are clear and, for the most part, dismaying. There will be no real school choice or empowering of parents. There will be no true flexibility for change-minded states to channel their federal education dollars into reforms of their own devising. Few of today's hundreds of narrow "categorical" programs will be merged. **There will, in fact, be no fundamental overhaul of this LBJ-era legislation, despite decades of evidence of its failure. But there will definitely be a whopping price tag,** as billions of additional dollars are attached to these meager reforms.

What happened? In hindsight, it's clear that the White House began with the plan it should have ended with, always a dubious strategy. When it came to tax cutting, the administration welcomed proposals that went farther than it really wanted, thus positioning itself in the middle. In education, however, the White House discouraged conservatives from offering their own bill, which meant the president's plan was the most "extreme" version out there. On a high-visibility issue in a closely balanced Congress, that meant dilution was inevitable.

The administration also insisted on a "bipartisan" measure, which meant compromising with veteran Democratic education craftsmen Edward Kennedy in the Senate and George Miller in the House. Masters of their art, they ended up with nearly everything they wanted. That meant lots more money—and the elimination of every "conservative" feature of the Bush plan.

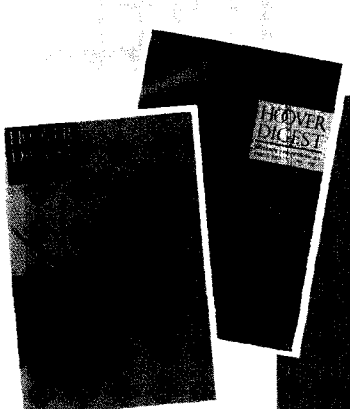
But congressional Republicans didn't help much, either. Obliged to support their president, which meant tolerating all those leftward compromises, they trotted out their "choice" and "flexibility" amendments knowing that these were doomed. The one place House conservatives actually made things worse was testing. They could not abide the Bush proposal for all states to have their achievement gains auditec by the federally funded National Assessment of Educational Progress. So they voted to let states pick their own audit instruments. If this provision survives conference, we can expect a lot of false "good news" and a worrisome weakening of the country's most important test.

But that's not all the conferees must contend with. **Their biggest challenge in this thousand-page measure is an obscure provision called "adequate yearly progress" (AYP),** which tells states and schools how much achievement-boosting they must deliver each year en route to leaving no child behind. This formula is intricate beyond anyone's capacity to explain to parents and teachers. It's susceptible to concealing failure by poor and minority kids. It's none too demanding regarding the rate at which these gaps must be closed (10–12 years). Yet conferees are being urged to soften it further.

How AYP got weakened and complexified is a sorry backroom tale. Suffice to say that, however Congress finally phrases it, successful implementation may never occur. And that, alas, is the bottom line for the whole bill: after all this fuss, it's quite likely not to lead to any discernible change in America's schools.

— Chester E. Finn Jr.

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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repeatedly blasted "bogus asylum-seekers" and warned that if Labour won reelection, Britain would become a "foreign land." Jörg Haider's Freedom Party, part of Austria's conservative governing coalition, warns of *Uberfremdung*—"overforeignerization." By contrast, Bush has all but banished immigrant-bashing from the Republican Party. Last week he angered the military by promising to halt bombing in Vieques—a blatant pander to Puerto Rican voters. Can anyone imagine a conservative German politician taking a similar stand to win the votes of Turks? The truth is that, on immigration, America is much less brutal than Europe.

Is this greater humanity connected to America's history as a country of immigrants? Of course. Is America's greater brutality on questions of crime and punishment connected to its history of anti-black racism? Of course. But these historical contingencies are exactly the point. To suggest that European values are, in some overarching way, more compassionate than American ones constitutes a species of European self-delusion. It's not surprising that the Continent's elites might wish to indulge in it. What's stranger is that the American establishment so willingly plays along. ■

Rod Paige learns the hard way.

Public Schooling

By Noam Scheiber

It's not often that a high-ranking administration official tells a reporter that another high-ranking administration official is essentially dead weight. It's even rarer that such assertions are made on the record. But that's pretty much what happened in early June, when top White House education aide Sandy Kress, during an interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, described Education Secretary Rod Paige as "a little bit on the periphery."

Even more remarkably, Kress was almost certainly guilty of understatement. In recent weeks, as the administration's education initiative has made its way through Congress, Paige has been conspicuously absent. Since March he has met with only a handful of members of Congress. Hill staffers can't explain what his education vision is—or if he ever had one. And at times Paige has seemed painfully unaware of both the policy and the politics behind the massive education reform effort he ostensibly oversees. In any administration, the blatant marginalization of the only African American domestic Cabinet secretary would be noteworthy. In an administration that loudly trumpets its commitment to Cabinet government and racial diversity, it's stunning.

The first sign that Paige was out of the White House education loop, say close observers, was his disastrous interview with Cokie Roberts on ABC's "This Week" the day after the inauguration. To Roberts's repeated inquiries about whether the White House education agenda included vouchers, Paige mustered only a tentative "I think that's what it includes" before retreating into platitudes about "dialogue," "discussion," and "listening." True, Bush demands scrupulous circumspection from his surrogates. But that usually leaves the impression that they know more than they're saying. Paige just sounded confused. "It was painful to watch," recalls one education-policy expert. "[It seemed as if] nobody had given this guy basic media training."

Paige's grasp of administration policy hadn't improved much when the White House sent him to testify before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee four weeks later. According to those who watched the exchange, Paige stumbled through a virtual repetition of his "This Week" performance. Each time Democratic Senator Patty Murray demanded to know how the administration's testing proposal would be funded, for example, Paige ventured only that "[w]e will include money in the budget." Says one Democratic Senate staffer, "It didn't seem like he'd been well briefed."

As the administration began pushing its education proposal through Congress, Paige found himself quickly cut out of the action. As with the tax cut, the White House plan was to negotiate with just enough moderate Democrats to win a majority in the Senate. But the Bushies could ignore education committee Chairman Jim Jeffords and ranking member Ted Kennedy—neither of whom were initially involved in those negotiations—for only so long. Aware that Kennedy could complicate the process by demanding hearings, the White House sought to convince him he was a key player without actually dealing with him. And one of the administration's methods, say Democratic Senate aides, was to use Paige as a decoy.

During the first month of education negotiations, the White House dispatched Paige to meet with Jeffords and Kennedy. "To an outsider coming to Washington, one would think the action would be with the chairman and ranking member," says one Democratic aide about Paige's expectations for those meetings. But when Kennedy discovered that the White House was doing its real negotiating with the moderates, he faced a choice: He could either compromise on some of the administration's favored provisions—testing and greater flexibility for states—or forget about influencing the final bill. In choosing the former, he effectively ended Paige's direct involvement, superficial as it had been.

When it came time to write the bill's final language, Paige was nowhere to be found. "People realized that [Paige] was outside of the process," says one House Republican staffer. "I don't think anyone thought that he was really involved." Instead, the White House relied almost exclusively on Kress, his deputy Sarah Youssef, White House domestic policy adviser Margaret LaMontagne, Cheney education aide Nina Rees, and congressional liaison Townsend McNitt. The Education Department's only significant representation was a team of lawyers who trailed Kress and churned out drafts of legislation as he requested it—the "If we did this, what would it do?" work, as one Democratic aide puts it.

Some administration officials insist none of this matters since Paige's chief responsibility is to sell the president's

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broad proposals to the public and to Congress. But by excluding him from the bill's crafting, the White House has made it virtually impossible for Paige to be a credible public spokesman. Earlier this year. while Paige was out making the case against additional education spending, the administration caved to congressional demands for exactly that. The following month, unaware that the administration had abandoned its school-choice proposal, Paige ventured into decidedly hostile territory, the National School Boards Association, to gin up support for vouchers. Then, in late May, after Robert Novak penned an online column accusing Paige of disliking the president's education bill, Paige personally called the conservative columnist to complain. Tactically, the move was less than inspired. Rather than be cowed, Novak simply disclosed their conversation in the subsequent print version of his column, reemphasizing the point and publicly embarrassing Paige.

Last week there was even speculation that Paige was contemplating retirement. Paige denied the rumors at a press conference on Friday, and White House officials insist he is settling in (Paige just bought a house in Washington). Likewise, independent education experts say Paige could play a larger role on future issues like special education and the reauthorization of the federal Office of Educational Research and Improvement, topics on which the president and those close to him have less well-defined ideas. And, statutorily at least, implementation of the education bill falls under Paige's jurisdiction.

But that won't change the fact that Paige's lack of involvement in the recent education bill is almost unprecedented. When the Clinton administration generated the previous version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1994, the effort emanated largely from the Department of Education. That the department has been so irrelevant this time around—and the White House so prominent—has taken many observers by surprise. "I was just in a meeting with [the Congressional Research Service] this morning, and the guy from CRS said this was the first time he's ever seen this," says one House Democratic aide.

In January, while facing accusations that his multicultural appointments amounted to tokenism, Bush vowed to rely more heavily on his Cabinet and administration "principals" than had any recent president. And to some extent he has. Secretary of State Colin Powell is by all accounts a key foreign policy player. Ditto for National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. But it's on domestic policy that a diverse Cabinet is supposed to really matter. And domestic policy has remained firmly in the hands of a small, overwhelmingly white group of close Bush aides.

The irony is that Paige didn't have to be a token appointment—he is, after all, a successful urban school reformer in an administration ostensibly dedicated to raising levels of achievement among poor and minority children. But from the beginning the White House seems to have expected him to be the education plan's public face—and nothing more. "The big problem is that Paige did have a lot to offer, but he didn't get a chance to offer it," says the House Democratic aide. Ah, the soft bigotry of low expectations. ■

On the Hill

Missing Linc

By Michael Crowley

Twenty-five years before he became the most unlikely star in the U.S. Senate, Lincoln Chafee was a shaggy-haired nomad, fresh from a drug-enhanced stint at Brown University, shoeing horses at harness racetracks in the United States and Canada. His father, Senator John Chafee, may have been a titan of Rhode Island politics, but Linc, as he is known, had little interest in the family business. It wasn't until he grew bored with the private sector—he was working as a manager in a steel mill at the time—that he decided to enter public life. "The impetus for getting into politics," Chafee recently told a Gannett reporter, "was the lack of excitement in the new jobs." Not quite as powerful an epiphany as, say, Vietnam or Watergate, but there you have it.

So when Linc Chafee was named to fill his late father's seat in November 1999, he didn't exactly seem destined to become a Senate powerhouse. But some politicians thrust themselves into the limelight, and some have the limelight thrust onto them. And ever since CNN reported that the liberal Republican Chafee had come "far closer" to leaving the GOP this spring than people realized, his every utterance has been exhaustively parsed for signs that he might follow in the footsteps of Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords. Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle has personally approached him about switching parties, offering (according to Chafee) unspecified "inducements." President Bush has hosted Chafee in the Oval Office, jokingly comparing him to a visiting foreign dignitary. Since Jeffords's switch, Chafee, who didn't appear on a single major network TV show during his first 18 months in office, has popped up on "Crossfire," "Hardball" (twice), "Inside Politics," and Fox News.

But the comparisons between Chafee and Jeffords overlook some rather significant differences. Jeffords is widely considered to be one of the strongest minds in the Senate. Chafee—sometimes called "Missing Linc" during his time on the city council in Warwick, Rhode Island—is not. Jeffords's defection was the culmination of decades of congressional conflict over cherished policies like special education and the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact. Chafee, a kind of accidental senator, has served less than two years. No one really knows what he cares about, which makes him dangerously unpredictable. One Rhode Island politico suspects Chafee doesn't take being a senator—or being a Republican—very seriously at all and might switch because "[h]e's the kind of guy who can wake up one day and say, 'Yeah, I'll do it.'" Another observer compares him to Chauncy Gardner, the charmed naïf from the Peter Sellers film *Being There* who blunders obliviously into Washington power games and becomes a celebrity when his simple aphorisms about gardening are misinterpreted as profound political insights. If you're a

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Washington Republican, it's hard to avoid the sense that history may be repeating itself—first as tragedy, now as farce.

Lincoln Chafee's life trajectory almost makes George W. Bush's look careerist. Like W., Chafee benefited from an exceptional pedigree. The Chafees were one of Rhode Island's founding "five families," a landed aristocracy with a concentration of wealth and power achievable only in a state so small. By the time Linc graduated from Brown in 1975, his father had already served as Rhode Island governor and secretary of the Navy, and he was soon to be a U.S. senator. But Linc had little interest in a life of WASP noblesse oblige. His time in college was, as he puts it, "experimental"—he has admitted to using marijuana and cocaine "several times" while there. After graduation he decamped to a horse-shoeing school in bohemian Bozeman, Montana, after which he bounced through a variety of horse-racing and factory jobs before returning to Rhode Island in 1983. There he spent six years as a city councilman in Warwick, the state's second-largest city—a job for which he was, unsurprisingly, not prepared. (One critic says that initially Chafee "had no grasp" of local issues.) And, after being elected Warwick's mayor in 1992, he cemented an emerging reputation for eccentricity by using taxpayer dollars to pay for, among other things, pet frogs for his office aquarium. When Chafee's father died suddenly in 1999, Rhode Island's Republican governor appointed Lincoln Chafee to fill the seat.

When Chafee had to face voters in 2000, after less than a year in office, Republicans feared they might lose a seat they had counted on for decades. Chafee, though by all accounts decent and genial, was uncomfortable on the stump and prone to oddball statements and painfully long pauses. "There were people who said, after watching him, 'My God, I cannot believe this is a U.S. senator,'" says a former aide to Chafee's opponent, Representative Bob Weygand. But Democrats got bogged down in a bloody primary fight that centered on abortion. And Chafee benefited from the memory of his beloved father. Some local pollsters even speculated that some Rhode Island voters thought Linc *was* his father. Chafee wound up trouncing Weygand by 15 points.

From the start, Washington conservatives saw Chafee as susceptible to bullying. White House Chief of Staff Andy Card called *The Providence Journal* to suggest Chafee was "naïve" for thinking Democrats were interested in bipartisanship. When *Wall Street Journal* columnist Paul Gigot "interviewed" Chafee in March, he subjected the senator to an exceptional browbeating—and then wrote about it as if he were the senior partner in the exchange: "Every objection he offers is easily answered. Yet he still won't budge.... Mr. Chafee sounds like a man searching for some excuse, any excuse, to vote no, just to prove a point, whatever it is." Finally, the supply-side Club for Growth retaliated against Chafee's opposition to the tax cut with TV attack ads.

As with Jeffords, the hardball tactics have helped Chafee at home. Local columnists ridiculed the Club for Growth ads. "A COMMERCIAL MEANT TO HURT ACTUALLY HELPS," one *Providence Journal* headline declared. "Texas bully talk doesn't impress many people around these parts," wrote a local columnist. "Furthermore, incurring the displeasure of George W. Bush isn't going to lose you any votes." A recent Brown University poll showed that 59 percent of Rhode Island voters think Chafee is doing a "good" job or an "excellent" job, compared with 34 percent for Bush.

Close observers of Jeffords realized he would react angrily to right-wing bullying on behalf of right-wing policies. But no one is exactly sure how Chafee will react, and his behavior so far doesn't exactly suggest a coherent pattern. In a recent interview with *The Providence Journal*, for instance, Chafee said he'd reconsider switching if Republicans took back control of the Senate. No one seems to know whether he was serious; an aide downplays the comment by saying it was the product of fuzzy thinking at six o'clock in the morning. On the question of switching, his spokesman tells me Chafee's position is "never say never"—the Washington equivalent of "I'm thinking about it"—and Chafee recently confessed that he's drawn up a list of defection pros and cons. Some Rhode Island Democratic political operatives aren't even convinced Chafee is the one who'll make the decision. One suggests that Linc is driven mainly by his chief of staff, Dave Griswold, who held the same position under Linc's father. "I think Griswold is really the key behind the whole operation," he says. "He's really running the show."

The local observers who believe Chafee does have a strategy think it's probably to scare the GOP but ultimately to stay put. "The widely accepted view here in Rhode Island is that he's not going to switch," says an aide to one state Democrat. Chafee, locals say, feels an inherited loyalty to the Republican Party; he recently told the *Los Angeles Times* that he didn't switch parties this spring after asking himself, "What would my father think?" What's more, a change of parties would not be quite the freebie it was for Jeffords, who has been a popu-

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lar figure in his state for decades. If Chafee became a Democrat, he would be virtually guaranteed a primary challenge from the left, party activists say. If, like Jeffords, Chafee turned independent, there's no guarantee he'd prevail in a three-way race. By contrast, "[a]s a Republican facing future general elections I don't see anyone on the horizon who could beat him," says pollster and Brown University political scientist Darrell West. Some believe Chafee has never seriously contemplated switching but is using his media moment to buff poll numbers at home and elevate himself from backbencher to minor celebrity in Washington. Says one Democratic Rhode Island politico: "The term 'dumb like a fox' comes to mind."

But, dumb or not, Democrats would love to have Chafee. And, in their yearning, they have noticed a deep wisdom in his goofiness. "Obviously Democrats have underestimated him," says one party strategist. "Shoeing horses and smoking dope when most of these guys were running for city council is broadening and empowering in a way that most of these guys don't understand." Or, as the fictional U.S. president in *Being There* says after one of Chauncy's truisms about gardening: "I admire your good, solid sense. That's precisely what we lack on Capitol Hill." Chauncy just smiles obliviously and shakes his powerful new friend's hand. ■

Asian America discovers identity politics.

Reorientation

By Franklin Foer

"You want to know about the awakening? *This* is the awakening." Ginny Gong, a manager in the Montgomery County culture and recreation department, is crowded into the wood-paneled school board chamber in Rockville, Maryland. Squeezed into the aisles around her are a Vietnamese financial analyst from Lockheed Martin, a Chinese administrator from the National Institutes of Health, and about a dozen other activists. When a speaker finishes a passionate peroration about the "disenfranchisement" of Asian Americans, the crowd applauds, and some hold above their heads yellow placards that exclaim THIS TIME.

This time, they want the county to name an elementary school in Germantown, on the outermost fringe of suburban Washington, after the late Hawaii Senator Spark M. Matsunaga. For five years Gong has lobbied the school board on the issue. "Whenever I saw a school named for an African American or another minority, it made me so mad," Gong tells me. "Everyone thinks Asians are so passive. We get ignored." She has a point. While Montgomery County has schools named after Roberto Clemente, Sequoyah, and Ronald McNair (an African American astronaut), it contains not a single public building honoring an Asian American.

Neoconservatives have an explanation for this: Asian Americans are the "model minority." Coined by admiring right-wingers in the mid-'60s, the phrase portrayed Asian Americans as the Ward Cleavers of American ethnic politics—industrious, conservative strivers with little interest in the angry multiculturalism of other minority groups. By decade's end, a small shelf could be filled with tracts like *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* and *Japanese Americans: Oppression and Success*. They generally shared the conclusion of Thomas Sowell's later work, *Ethnic America: A History*—Asian Americans owed their economic success to the fact that they "studiously avoided political agitation."

For a while, the model-minority theory fit. Aside from a few activists, Asian Americans seemed largely uninterested in street protest and largely untroubled by picayune cases of political incorrectness. In fact, polling revealed that the vast majority of Asian Americans were fiscally conservative, anti-Communist Republicans. As recently as 1992 they chose George Bush over Bill Clinton by a 27 percent margin. By the end of the decade, however, the situation had flipped. Al Gore won Asian American votes by 14 percent. Nor was this a momentary reversal. According to the recently published National Asian American Political Survey, 57 percent of Asians who self-identify with a party consider themselves Democrats. Indeed, over the last decade, the Asian American political, business, and media elite have been transformed. Almost 30 years after other ethnic groups, Asian Americans have stopped worrying and learned to love identity politics.

Before the late '60s there was no such thing as an "Asian American." Asian immigrants identified themselves by their family's country of origin; others sometimes lumped them together as "Orientals." But then came the New Left and its anti-imperialist zeitgeist. And on college campuses, where that zeitgeist was strongest, students banded together against the colonial overtones of "Oriental" and began calling themselves Asian Americans. University campuses such as Yale and Princeton saw the advent of slogans like "yellow power" and "yellow is beautiful"; in 1968 and 1969, students at San Francisco State College and the University of California at Berkeley went on strike demanding programs in Asian American studies.

The student leaders vowed to go into Asian communities and to help their oppressed people rise up. As Stanford University historian Gordon Chang puts it, "The activists went back to Chinatown, Little Tokyo, and Koreatown with their big ideas about Asian American consciousness." But their slogans fell on deaf ears. "The term Asian American didn't mean a thing to these people," Chang says. Sometimes the reception was openly hostile. The Japanese American Citizens League condemned the student strikers. In her book *Asian American Dreams*, Helen Zia describes how lefty activists endlessly sparred with established fraternal organizations that prized anti-communism above all else.

The gap between the activists and the broader Asian American community wasn't just ideological; it was sociological as well. The student leaders—Yale's Don Nakanishi, Princeton's Zia—were American-born. They spoke English

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and knew of Asia only from college courses and family stories. The vast majority of Asian Americans, by contrast, were fresh off the boat. Thanks to Lyndon Johnson's 1965 lifting of stringent immigration quotas, 2.6 million Asians flooded into metropolitan America in a 15-year period. And, not surprisingly, the new arrivals cared more about building their lives and businesses than about combating American racism. Besides, they found the students' notions of pan-ethnic identity a bit bewildering. Why should Chinese and Japanese—or Japanese and Koreans—suddenly declare common cause after centuries of distrust and warfare?

The student activists gradually created a pan-ethnic civil rights establishment with legal defense funds in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco and with an agenda borrowed unabashedly from African American politics. As Zia puts it, they craved "the emergence of Asian American leaders who could stir up passions in the manner of the Reverend Al Sharpton." But the activists still lacked a broad following. And to the degree Asian America had leaders, they came from its burgeoning business elite, from professionally successful, politically conservative recent immigrants who tended to describe themselves in terms of national identity. For someone like John Huang, a banker who emigrated from Taiwan in 1969, there was no reason to create elaborate alliances with Japanese and Filipino immigrants. Institutions like the National Association of Chinese-American Bankers, which he headed, suited his networking and political needs much better. Instead of pan-ethnic civil rights agitation, the businessmen based their politics on promoting anti-communism abroad and protecting liberal immigration law at home. On the whole, the Republican Party suited them well. In 1988, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, Asian Americans gave the Bush-Quayle campaign more soft money than any other "donor bloc." Some Republican strategists predicted Asians would become the GOP's Jews—a loyal minority constituency with hefty check-writing ability.

THE ASIAN AMERICAN business elite might well have stuck with the Republicans. In fact, Newt Gingrich's libertarian bent appealed to immigrants who grew up distrusting the corrupt dictators and bureaucrats of their homelands. But then the GOP blew it. Following former California Governor Pete Wilson, Republicans jumped on the anti-immigration bandwagon in hopes of building an indomitable base of angry white men. In 1995 Wyoming Senator Alan Simpson pushed legislation to drastically reduce legal immigration and carefully track resident aliens. A year later, a provision in the welfare reform bill stripped legal immigrants of food stamps and other benefits.

Terrified at the prospect of being deported or losing benefits, thousands of Asian resident aliens rushed to become citizens. With the Simpson legislation pending, courthouses were no longer large enough to hold naturalization ceremonies. In the Bay Area, the Immigration and Naturalization Service set up shop in the San Jose Convention Center and San Francisco's 3,000-seat Masonic Auditorium. On their way out, the new citizens were greeted by activists like David Lee of the Chinese American Voters Education Committee. In 1996 groups like Lee's registered an unprecedented 75,000 new voters. And, according to Lee, most of them became Democrats.

The government's assault on immigrants' rights gave the civil rights groups the constituency they had long lacked. In Los Angeles they recruited thousands for a downtown march against Wilson's Proposition 187, which also restricted benefits for illegal immigrants. At Berkeley and UCLA, they organized student rallies. Even members of the business elite swung left, switching party affiliation after what they considered the GOP's betrayal.

But if Republican immigrant-bashing sent Asians pouring into the Democratic Party, they soon discovered that it wasn't free of nativism either, which radicalized the community even further. "Nineteen ninety-six was supposed to be the coming-out party," recalls Nakanishi, now a political scientist at UCLA. "Asian American politics was finally going to be politically mature." Seeking to capitalize on the GOP's blunders, the Democratic National Committee, led by vice finance chairman John Huang, aggressively sought checks from the Asian American entrepreneurial class. President Clinton appeared at Asian American fund-raisers in L.A.'s Century Plaza and Washington's Carlton Hotels, intending to seal the new relationship. There was loud talk that the community would be rewarded with patronage: Berkeley Chancellor Chang-Lin Tien was considered a shoo-in to replace Hazel O'Leary as secretary of energy.

SO WHEN THE fund-raising scandals broke, making household names of Huang, Maria Hsia, Charlie Trie, and Johnny Chung, the effect was devastating. An election that had begun with euphoric pronouncements about Asian American political power ended with congressional investigations and racist slurs by Ross Perot. ("Now then, Mr. Huang is still out there hard at work for the Democrats," Perot told a crowd at the University of Pennsylvania. "Wouldn't you like to have someone out there named O'Reilly?") And the DNC itself seemed to turn on its friends, hiring the accounting firm Ernst and Young to question donors with Asian names about their citizenship and business dealings abroad. Which left the immigrant elite even more convinced that the civil rights activists were right. One big donor, Charlie Woo, the owner of the Los Angeles-based company Megatoys, told me, "I had always recognized that the prejudice was a factor. I didn't realize that it can destroy you and ruin everything you work for."

The radicalizing effect of the fund-raising scandals might have worn off. "I think people began to forget," says Howard University Law Professor Frank Wu. "But then there was Wen Ho Lee." The physicist's 1999 arrest on charges of espionage revived the Asian elite's suspicions of deep-seated American racism. Groups that in the past had carefully avoided political controversies responded angrily. The Committee of 100, a prestigious Chinese-American fraternal club that had never expressed much interest in domestic politics, suddenly sounded like the campus radicals. Henry S. Tang, the group's chairman, told the *Los Angeles Times*: "No matter how accomplished, no matter how educated, no matter how wealthy, no matter how loyal, [an Asian American] could

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still become suspected of activities counter to the interests of this country." The new tone affected not only the more traditionally political second and third generations but newcomers as well. After a long history of sidestepping civil rights issues, Chinese-language newspapers like the Taiwanese-owned *World Journal* and the national *Tsing Tao* chain of dailies made Lee's freedom a crusade. Articles turned Lee into a Chinese-American everyman, describing in intricate detail his suburban neighborhood, his assimilated family, his workplace, and his unjust fate. Portia Li, the correspondent who covered the case for *World Journal*, told me, "We wanted to educate about civil rights. I wrote a lot about racial profiling and discrimination [against Chinese scientists]."

Among the immigrant engineers and scientists of Silicon Valley, Lee generated instant empathy. "Traditionally, Asian Americans felt you could advance in science based on merit," says Woo. "This was a wake-up call. In America, you can't hide in your research lab." The Wen Ho Lee Defense Fund raised nearly $500,000, much of it from Bay Area techies. And, in the wake of Lee's arrest, Asian American scientists began to come forward with stories of the glass ceiling. At the Energy Department's Livermore labs, nine Asian employees filed a discrimination report with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Joel Wong, a middle manager at Livermore, told the Associated Press that his bosses expect Asians "to behave as European-Americans." As an article in *Time* magazine predicted last year, "Lee's nine-month imprisonment may be the last time an Asian American suffers in silence."

TO SEE THE transformed Asian American politics in action, go to San Francisco. Last fall, on the one hundredth day of Wen Ho Lee's imprisonment, Mabel Teng, campaigning for reelection to the city's Board of Supervisors, spoke at a rally in front of San Francisco's federal building, telling the assembled crowd, "Our government is committing exactly what they did in Manazanar"—one of the camps where Japanese-Americans were interned during World War II. Similarly, Wilma Chan, a state assemblywoman from the Bay Area, told me, "Even though Asian Americans are only six percent of my district, I thought it was important to talk about Wen Ho Lee." Democratic organizer David Lee concludes that Wen Ho Lee "was all over the place last campaign."

Even politicians who have made careers of avoiding tricky ethnic issues have begun to play to the crowds—and to the donors. At a May meeting of the Committee of 100, Sacramento's soft-spoken Representative Bob Matsui accused House Republicans of fomenting anti-Asian sentiments. In Republican Matt Fong's 1998 Senate campaign, the candidate waxed radical at Asian American fund-raisers: "How American do you have to be to be considered American? Do I have to wear a blond wig to be considered an American?" And, after the election, Fong blamed his loss on racism: "It caught Wen Ho Lee, and it caught me."

Whereas Chinese-Americans traditionally viewed domestic politics through the lens of foreign policy—in particular, anti-communism—the fund-raising scandals and the Wen Ho Lee case have reversed that perspective: Many now see relations with China as an extension of their domestic struggle against discrimination. And that has led to greater sympathy for Chinese nationalism and increased suspicion of a U.S. hard line. "Chinese-Americans are increasingly uncomfortable with China-bashing," says Occidental College American Studies Professor Xiao-huang Yin. "They worry it will only serve to degrade Chinese-Americans in the eyes of larger society." During last spring's spy-plane standoff, many of the major Chinese-American organizations issued press releases condemning U.S. politicians and the media for creating an atmosphere hostile to Asians. In *The Village Voice*, Sin Yen Ling of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund argued that "Asian Americans are becoming the sacrificial lamb to secure the U.S.'s position as the superpower of the world." Chinese human rights activist Harry Wu has been eviscerated by local papers and activists for his criticisms of the Communist regime. In 1996 George Koo, a consultant with Deloitte and Touche, wrote an open letter to *Chinese Community Forum* calling on Chinese Americans "to keep the spot light on the dark and sleazy side of this man so that the American public will not be so easily led astray by his outrageous lies." And while some Chinese-American support for the People's Republic is clearly economically motivated—many young Chinese-Americans have gone to work in the emerging China market in recent years—ethnic solidarity is an equally powerful impulse. As China scholar Arthur Waldron puts it, young Chinese-Americans now go to China "just as young Jews go to Israel."

BUT IF IDENTITY politics represents a political coming of age for Asian Americans, it's not without its problems. After all, the natural logic of identity politics is for people to define themselves in ever-narrower categories, rejecting the possibility of cultural assimilation. And faced with that ethic, a category as broad and as recent as "Asian American" is in perennial danger of unraveling. Consider the fight in Montgomery County. When the opportunity to name a school finally came last March, a coalition of Japanese, Vietnamese, and Chinese leaders met and settled on the Japanese-American Matsunaga. "He's a great American. He should be remembered," Gong told me. The community prepared to bask in its impending victory.

But, as the school board prepared to officially select Matsunaga, Gong and her allies came under fire. Chinese-American leaders, including the former president of the Organization of Chinese Americans, objected. "They didn't like that there would be a Japanese spelling on the school," says local activist Michael Lin. "They still remember atrocities the Japanese committed during World War II." In a school board meeting earlier this month, the debate spilled into the open. The Chinese activists brought their own raucous contingent, carrying placards that proposed Chinese names. The board approved Matsunaga, but only after three angry rounds of voting. "I'm a bit disgusted," says school board president Nancy King. "I thought naming a school would be a happy event. Instead, it's torn a community apart." Live by multiculturalism, die by multiculturalism. ■

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Mike Bloomberg wants to run your life.

Mission Control

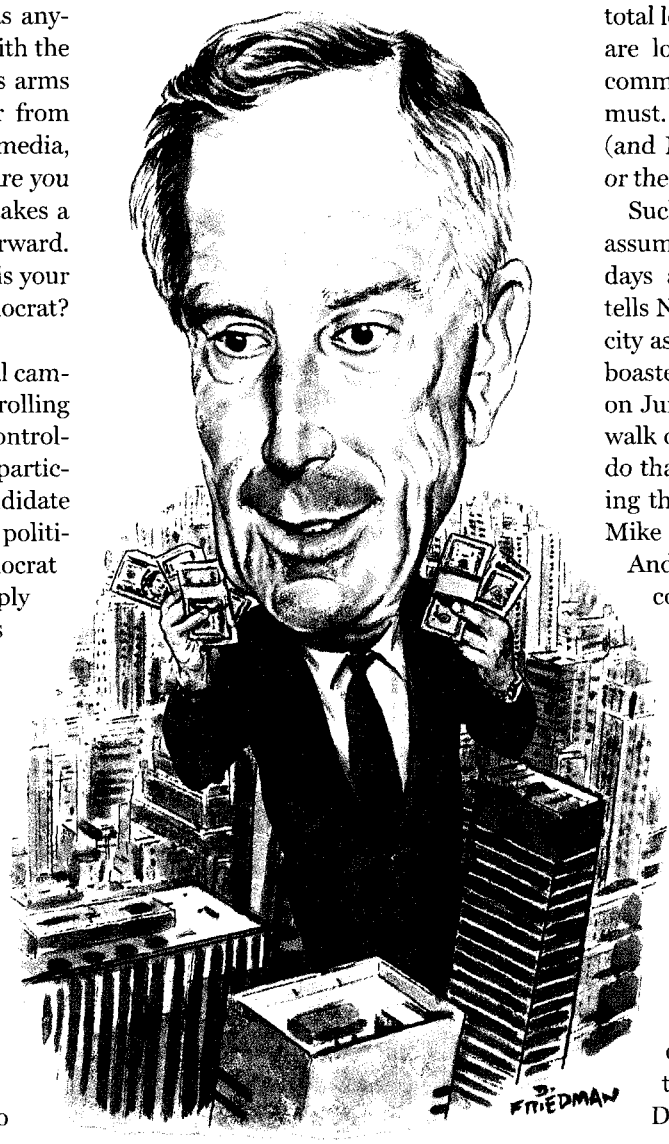
By MICHELLE COTTLE

NEW YORK

THE YOUNG WOMAN clutching a video cam appears in grave danger of having her eyes pecked out. She dodges and weaves and backs slowly away but cannot escape the advancing (and quite pointy) nose of Bill Cunningham, spokesman for Michael R. Bloomberg. It's June 6, and Bloomberg, the billionaire businessman turned New York mayoral candidate, is making his first official campaign appearance at an interminable awards breakfast on the Harlem campus of City College. The entire New York media is there to document the event. So is Elizabeth Mazzini, an opposition researcher sent to videotape the candidate's first day. But not if Cunningham has anything to say about it. "Are you with the media?" he barks, extending his arms to prevent the terrified tracker from fleeing. "You're not from the media, and you didn't pay to be here. Are you with the opposition?" Mazzini takes a step back; Cunningham steps forward. She slips left; he follows. "Who is your boss?" he demands. "Is he a Democrat? Who is your *boss*?"

To some degree, every political campaign is about control. Controlling access. Controlling images. Controlling information. But control is particularly important when your candidate is a billionaire tycoon with zero political experience, a longtime Democrat who turned Republican simply because the primary is less crowded, and an oft-described "guy's guy" accustomed to saying whatever he wants, whenever he wants. Under these conditions, maintaining tight-fisted control—over the press, the opposition, and the candidate himself—is not simply the Bloomberg team's best chance of winning the election. It's their only chance of not unraveling altogether.

Which is strangely appropriate. Because even before his political ambitions surfaced, no one understood the value of control better than Mike Bloomberg, a guy who literally built his fortune on the control of financial information. Since its founding in 1981, his eponymous company's profit center has been its customized computer terminal/software system (now an online data feed), which lets clients instantly access, analyze, and compare historical data on stocks, bonds, and commodities. Today "Bloombergs," as the machines are known, are a must-have for everyone who's anyone in the markets. Coincidentally, "control" also defines Bloomberg's model of corporate leadership: He owns close to three-quarters of the corporation's stock and is known for putting the "cult" in "corporate culture." With Mike—absolutely *everyone* calls him Mike—total loyalty is paramount. The hours are long, the pace is frenetic, and commitment to Mike's "vision" is a must. As one former Bloomberger (and Mike fan) puts it, it's "my way or the highway."



Such corporate idiosyncrasies are assuming larger significance these days as candidate Mike repeatedly tells New Yorkers he would run their city as he has run his business. As he boasted in his announcement speech on June 6, "Our customers think we walk on water, and we do. And I can do that for the city." Before performing this particular miracle, however, Mike must first get himself elected. And to do that, the consummate controller will have to become the controllee—a carefully packaged, meticulously managed product for sale to the public. It won't be easy.

Candidate Mike likes to tell voters that he personifies the American dream—and that as mayor, he will help them achieve it as well (on a smaller scale, of course). The mogul does, in fact, represent an updated version—slightly cleaner, faster, more glamorous—of the rags-to-riches tales of old. Born on Valentine's Day 1942, the child of middle-

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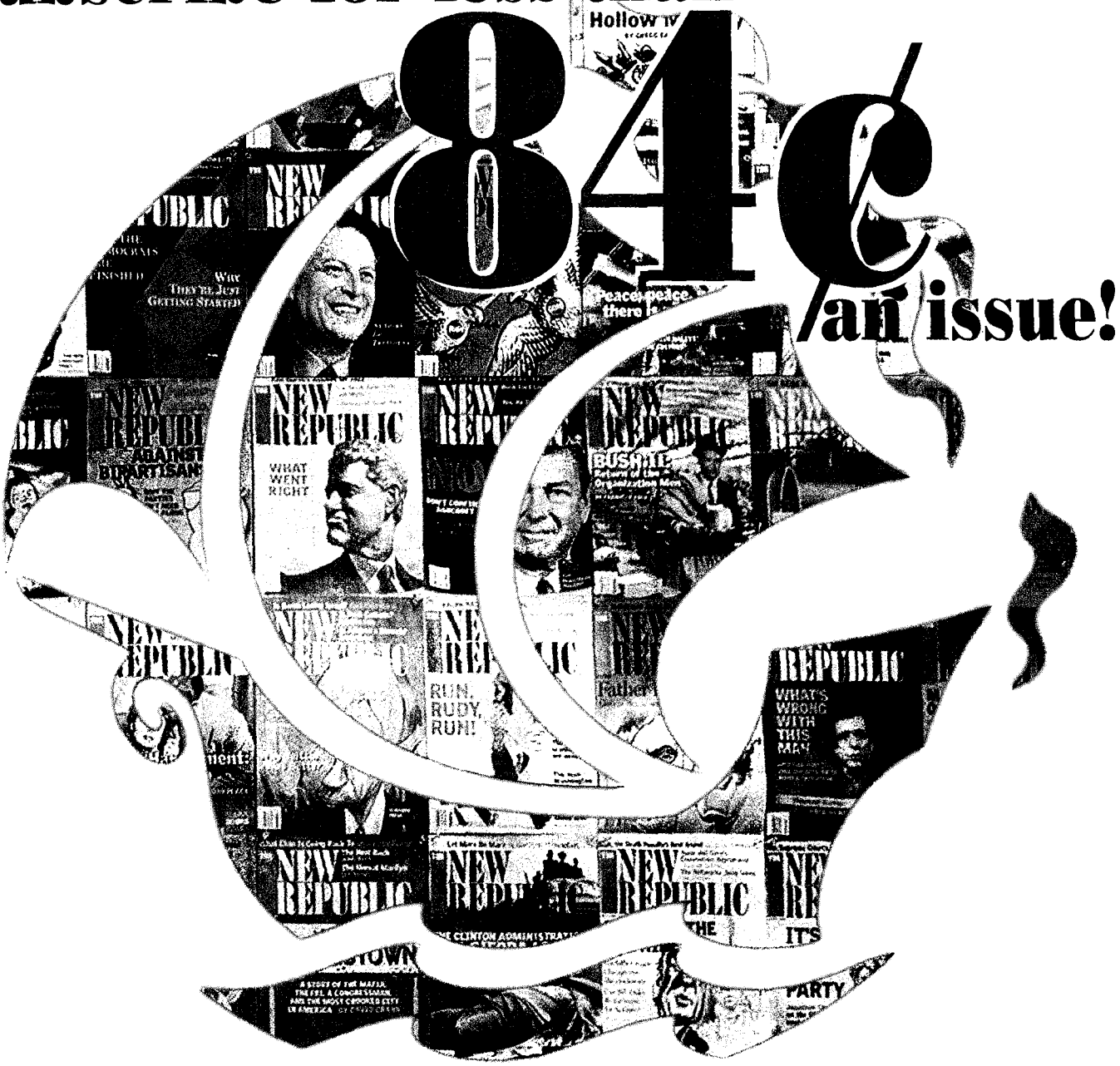

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class parents in Medford, Massachusetts, young Mike was one of the few students from his public school to attend college. ("Vocational training was the main mission," he recalls in the redundantly titled autobiography *Bloomberg by Bloomberg*.) With help from student loans and part-time jobs, Mike paid his way through Johns Hopkins University, then headed off to Harvard Business School. Graduating in 1966, he was turned down for military service because of flat feet and instead wound up in a low-level job with the trading firm Salomon Brothers. A self-described "up-and-coming star," he rose through the ranks to become a general partner in 1972. Then, in 1981, disaster struck: The firm was bought, and Mike was fired. In his autobiography, he recalls that many people believed he was canned because of his arrogance—specifically for mouthing off that he could run the firm better than his bosses. Whatever the reason, Mike took his $10 million severance package and immediately launched a new venture.

THE REST, AS Mike likes to say, is history. As the mikeformayor.com website tells us: "In 1982, Bloomberg L.P. sold Merrill Lynch 20 subscriptions to its financial information computer terminal; 20 years later, Bloomberg L.P. has nearly 160,000 subscribers worldwide." Along the way (in 1990, to be exact), Mike started a news service as a way to boost the company's name-recognition and generate value-added content for the Bloombergs. Bloomberg News has since expanded into a global multimedia conglomerate with 80 bureaus and more than 1,200 reporters and editors. All told, Mike's empire boasts more than 7,000 employees and did an estimated $2.5 billion in business last year.

For Mike, the two keys to success are hard work ("The more you work, the better you do. It's that simple. I always outworked the other guy") and strict loyalty ("[Salomon] was a dictatorship, pure and simple. But a benevolent one," he writes admiringly in his autobiography). Both principles are on full display at Bloomberg L.P. Work schedules are brutal—twelve-hour days are the norm; time away from your desk for lunch is frowned upon—and the pressure to beat the other guy is unrelenting. For instance, when *The New York Times* picks up a wire story from Reuters instead of Bloomberg, says a former Bloomberger, "you have to do an autopsy on why your copy wasn't used. You have to write a memo and e-mail it to the bosses." Rants from superiors, public humiliations, and similarly heavy-handed management techniques are said to be commonplace.

Hard work is only half the equation. Mike demands total loyalty from his corporate children. And he gets it. Employees describe him in awed tones as a "tireless" (in early, out late), "hands-on" boss who would do anything for his people. But even the most flattering descriptions of Bloomberg—the man and the company—suggest, shall we say, control issues. The Park Avenue headquarters are legendarily swank, with funky fish tanks, elaborate floral arrangements, an endless supply of free snacks, and a giant news ticker running up through the center of the main spiral staircase. But the digs are also equipped with video cameras and electronic card readers that track employees' comings and goings. Employee e-mail messages are subject to review, and the computer system automatically censors profanity from all communiqués. There are no private offices—save Mike's modest, glassed-in workspace in the main newsroom—and building security is tighter than Dennis Hastert's trousers. The same is true in other bureaus. In Bloomberg's Washington office, for instance, there is one phone—jokingly dubbed "the Batphone"—located inside a closet; it's seen as the only secure spot for staffers looking to escape Big Brother. "You really had a paranoid feeling that you were watched and questioned on everything you did," says a former Bloomberg reporter. For those who leave the family, retribution is swift and final. The billionaire refuses to attend employees' going-away parties, and deserters can forget about ever being rehired. ("How could we ever again look in the eye the one who stayed if we let the 'traitor' come back?" he writes.)

Basically, there's nothing about Bloomberg the empire that isn't a function of Bloomberg the ego. (Just try to find a pencil, notepad, or coffee mug in the joint that isn't stamped with the B-word.) Although Bloomberg News is directly overseen by the very hands-on Matthew Winkler, there is no question in anyone's mind who steers the ship. From London to Tokyo to New York, "it's a very strong and uniform corporate culture that does emanate from Mike," says former Bloomberger (and tremendous "Mike bull") Rob Cox. "Mike has a tightly knit group of people who help him run the company," says another ex-reporter. What they don't help him with, at least to hear Mike tell it, is the empire's public image. "I handle all our firm's internal and external public relations," he boasts in *B by B*. "It's just too important to give to anyone else."

THIS, NEEDLESS TO SAY, is generally not the way political campaigns are run. And, while Mike's estimated $4 billion has helped attract an impressive cadre of political gurus (Cunningham, David Garth, Doug Schoen, Lawrence Mandelker, Maureen Connelly), it's not clear whether they'll be able to steer Mr. Command-and-Control through a campaign in which any number of factors—opponents, media, public opinion—are beyond his control. Already the campaign's attempts to shield Mike from the garden-variety unpleasantness of New York politics have prompted public sniggering. For starters, there was the decision—a first in New York political history—to announce his candidacy not with a press conference or public event but with a TV spot, launched June 5 as part of a $350,000 ad buy. (The *New York Post*, describing Mike's evident discomfort before the camera, said the ads resembled "hostage tapes from the Taliban.") The next day brought Mike's much-publicized live announcement, at the Ridgewood Senior Center in Queens, which consisted of four minutes of (stilted, scripted) comments to the old folks, followed by a (stilted, highly scripted) speech delivered to a media-only audience. (A public announcement without the public. How clever.) Better yet, in the wake of Cunningham's morning tête-à-tête with the oppo researcher at City College, aides were instructed to block the tracker's video camera, and the campaign fired off a letter to the state Dems, complaining

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about this disgraceful (and utterly commonplace) intrusion. As *The Hotline*, Washington's daily digest of political news, ribbed: "And you think this is bad? Just wait.... "

It's small wonder, then, that Team Bloomberg seems to regard the media with a mix of suspicion and fear. While accepting some news coverage as a necessary evil, volunteers at campaign headquarters (not as posh as Bloomberg L.P. offices but far above par) eyeball visiting journalists warily, as though searching for retractable fangs. Press secretary Ed Skyler, a veteran of Rudy Giuliani's mayoral campaign, looks and sounds alternately ready to throw up or pass out from stress. When reporters on the press bus snickered over comments Mike had made about New York public school children ("They don't know how to present themselves," a New York camera crew captured him saying; "[t]hey have personal-hygiene problems"), Skyler jumped in to clarify—with a noticeable edge in his voice. And more than one reporter requesting an interview with the candidate on his first day of campaigning was brusquely informed, "Well, I'm not going to put you in the car with him." The New York media quickly began grumbling that the campaign was playing favorites, denying interviews to the reputedly combative local press while granting access to presumably less well-informed national and international correspondents.

Ultimately, however, controlling the media may be a breeze compared to controlling the candidate. Mike, it seems, has a hard-earned reputation for mouthing off at the most inappropriate moments—which, while colorful in a business mogul, can prove hazardous on the campaign trail. Even with careful management, Mike still gives advisers fits. There were, for example, his ill-advised remarks to London's *Daily Telegraph*, in which he compared himself to JFK and said his billionaire status would make him more appealing to voters because "[i]t's like when a woman sees a model in a women's mag or if you're a man you see the football player out on the field.... [Y]ou want to identify." (The campaign declined further comment.) Another reporter eventually "put in the car" with Mike later noted that his handlers clearly wanted to toss her out almost from the get-go because the candidate just kept saying all these things he wasn't supposed to. Even more recently, Mike told *The New York Times* that, when annoyed by a reporter's queries during the National Puerto Rican Day parade, he had responded with a stream of profanities aimed at derailing the article's publication.

Mike's loose tongue, in fact, (allegedly) played a role in at least one of the three sexual harassment suits filed against him in recent years. In 1997 a former sales executive charged that, among other crude statements, Mike greeted news of her pregnancy with the response: "Kill it." Ultimately, the case was settled for an undisclosed sum and no admission of guilt from the billionaire. (Another case was withdrawn; a third, dismissed when the plaintiff failed to meet court deadlines.) In preparation for his mayoral run, Mike took a lie-detector test to prove his innocence. Of course, the campaign has declined to release the results (and now suggests there could be legal barriers to such), so voters must simply take the campaign's word that the candidate was exonerated.

Gaffes and profanity aside, Mike—unaccustomed to following orders—periodically has trouble staying on message. Take his response to a reporter's inquiry about how he would approach the current negotiations under way between the mayor and the teachers' union. His basic impulse, Mike allowed, would be to lock the mayor and the head of the union in a room together, put them on a "hunger strike," and not let them out until they cut a deal. Then there was his repeated praise of Hillary Clinton's candidacy (unwise for a Republican, even in New York). And although Mike is being frantically tutored by a distinguished and eclectic group of experts, it's not always clear that everyone is on the same page. For instance, one tutor, lefty policy maven Ester Fuchs, recently told *The New York Observer* that she and the candidate share a "vision" that "[m]aking this city work is about making the neighborhoods work, not just midtown Manhattan." Mike, by contrast, had already cavalierly asserted in a speech before TV professionals, "I don't think that knowing the details of every single little program, law, neighborhood—whether you're running for president or governor or congressman or city council or mayor or whatever—those aren't the issues."

So what does Mike consider to be "the issues"? Details remain sketchy. He has talked about expanding Giuliani's program of installing video cameras in high-crime areas along with a profanity-censoring program on the city's computers (hey, it's good enough for Bloomberg L.P.), and has suggested setting up a sort of 911 hotline to handle citizens' complaints about potholes, trash pickup, and the like. (Perhaps not entirely practical in a city of eight million often-cranky folks.) And, to keep the candidate's policy chats as orderly as possible, the campaign has set up a schedule by which Mike will explain his position on one major issue every few days (or weeks) throughout the summer. His pet issue is education, which was the topic of his first policy speech. In addition to advocating raises and merit-based pay for teachers, Mike called for instituting student uniforms, disbanding the Board of Education, and establishing a "customer-service mentality," featuring an automated voice-mail system to allow parents to access constantly updated info on their children's grades, attendance, and homework.

But the truth is that, like pretty much all businessmen turned politicians, Mike isn't peddling his policy know-how; he's peddling his management genius. And in Mike's case, that genius consists of closely scripting the lives of all within his domain, of turning his environment into an extension of his personality. Observers might scoff at the idea that anyone could make the famously unruly world of New York politics conform to the dictates of any one person. Even Giuliani—a guy with a few control issues of his own—was constantly bedeviled by the competing agendas of his enemies and sometimes even those of his friends. But Mike has so far succeeded in controlling everything and everyone he's come into contact with. "I've never failed at anything yet," he likes to remind folks. Which suggests that the real worry for New Yorkers isn't what happens if his bid to run their city as he's run Bloomberg L.P. flops. It's what happens if it succeeds. ■

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Plottings, Real and Otherwise

RADICAL POLITICAL FIGures attract film-makers. Those figures seem the available equivalents of saints or idealistic heroes; and since a good number of them ended badly they have some of the aura of tragedy. But in most cases such figures are cinematic snares—not because of the character or the heroism, but because of the politics. Warren Beatty's *Reds* (1981) is the best film he has made, but it never became much more complex than a biography of John Reed's love life against a revolutionary background. Margarethe von Trotta's *Rosa Luxembourg* (1986) ought to be shown in every film school as an example of director's acuity and magnificent acting, but it wouldn't be of much use in a political school. No one could come away from either the Beatty film or the von Trotta film with a reliable view of the intricate ideas from which the protagonist's life emerged.

We do get from such films, however, some sense of character, character committed to selfless struggle; and that, even if incomplete intellectually, is at least a comprehensible tribute. This much is certainly true of **Lumumba** (Zeitgeist). The director, Raoul Peck, who was educated in Haiti and Zaire (Congo) and France and is a graduate of a Berlin film school, has long been concerned with Patrice Lumumba, the Congolese patriot. In 1991 Peck made a documentary about him, and now, after some other films, including two about Haiti, he comes back to Lumumba with a long and intense fictional treatment, fictional only in the sense that the story is re-enacted.

Peck begins with the ruthless tone that he wants to pervade the film—not with the assassination of Lumumba and two of his associates, but with the disinterment of their bodies, their dismemberment, and their cremation. Thus we are told that the story does not end with Lumumba's death, of which we have long known, but that he was considered a threat even after his death, that (as with some religious heretics) no relic could be left.

We first see Lumumba in the mid-1950s as a struggling worker in Stanleyville, then as a beer salesman in Leopoldville, then rising in the Congolese National Movement, which strove for independence from Belgium. Then come the beginnings of his conflict with Moïse Tshombe, the leader of the mineral-rich province of Katanga, along with Lumumba's jail sentences, including one during which he is being severely beaten by Belgian guards when an officer comes in to say that he is to be released so that he can attend a conference in Brussels. On rolls history: the Congo at last achieves independence from Belgium in June 1960, Joseph Kasavubu is elected president, and Lumumba is named prime minister and defense minister. Two months later, while the country is being torn by internecine angers—the province of Katanga wants to secede for business reasons—Lumumba and two friends are captured on a trip to rally unionist forces. Lumumba is seen as a danger to the Belgian business interests in Katanga, and he is also seen as a risk to other countries because of his Soviet affiliations. (He had asked the Soviet Union for airplanes to help suppress the troubles in Katanga.) He and his friends are transferred to Katanga, where they are executed by the Katangese.

Peck does not sanctify Lumumba: he is shown less as a victim than, for all his courage and resolve, as a leader of some arrogance and high-handedness. The trouble with the film is not canonization but, again, the recurrent defect in pictures about such people. The ideational data are so sketchy that it is as if we were riffling the pages of a complicated book. When soldiers burst into a council room with demands, Lumumba calms them by promising to visit their barracks the next day to discuss matters. Did he go? What were the demands? Did he settle them? We never know. And so on.

Peck is a fluent director, and he has found the perfect actor for the title role: Eriq Ebouaney, who has been seen here in several French films. (The dialogue of this film is mostly in French, with English subtitles.) Ebouaney is so driven with the very idea of Lumumba that no tinge of impersonation touches his performance. The film was not shot in Congo—the recent assassination of that nation's president is just one index of its volatility—but in other African countries.

Lumumba is part of this year's Human Rights Watch Film Festival now on tour, but it will also have individual release (e.g., July 20 in Los Angeles).

Swordfish (Warner Bros.) was a particular disappointment to me. When I read that it was about spies, I thought that the title would be used as it was in *Horsefeathers*, the Marx Brothers romp of 1932. "Swordfish" was the password that they used to get into a speakeasy. (Harpo found a way to mime it.) This film actually begins with John Travolta discoursing to a group of associates about the aesthetics of Sidney Lumet's *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), so I thought that we were in for a slew of filmic references; but no *Horsefeathers*.

What *is* funny, however, is that Travolta faults the Lumet film for its ultimate lack of realism, and then *Swordfish* lifts off into a spy story that is sheer fantasy, crudely contrived. It is so desperate for shock that, as it moves along, its chief plot technique is to unmask everything that we have been given to believe. Occasionally there are moments when the screenwriter, Skip Woods, executes a little tap dance, such as the opening film lecture, as a diversion from the jog-jog-jogging along. But for the most (and mostly workaday) part, it is all surprise entrances, sudden revelations that turn out to be false, and explosions, lots of them. Nor has Woods forgotten that old standby, the prophylactic car chase—the horrendous speedings through traffic with shootings and collisions and cars twirling in the air, which, though they take place in crowded cities, never injure a bystander.

The plot deals with a spy ring called Swordfish that abducts a master hacker who is to help the spies in a multi-billion-dollar heist that somehow involves the Defense Department's computer files. This hacker has a small daughter who lives with his ex-wife, and the evil ones use threats about the child as a means to persuade him. Travolta is the head of the spy ring, whose headquarters is staffed with the usual thugs and a flock of lovely women. The loveliest by far is Halle Berry, who has a role of her own—or at least a lot of scenes, which she does well enough—and who is becomingly dressed

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or undressed throughout.

The hacker is played by Hugh Jackman, one of the interchangeables—the flavorless young men who now clutter the American screen. For instance, Jackman and Josh Hartnett of *Pearl Harbor* could exchange places without any of us really being aware of it. Travolta is wretchedly miscast as the steel-brained mastermind of the caper; he has neither the air of diabolical command nor the nice-guy veneer over cruelty of some villains. Further note: several times during the film Travolta's gang carries out complicated plans that would have taken more time to rehearse than the director, Dominic Sena, was allotted to rehearse the whole film in which they take place. ■

Who decides how an opera should be performed?

Scandal and Scholarship

By PHILIP GOSSETT

I.

IN JULY 1958, *La Scala*, an Italian periodical devoted to news of Italian opera and musical life, published a polemical article by a young Australian musician named Denis Vaughan. Having become an assistant conductor to Sir Thomas Beecham four years earlier, Vaughan had grown fascinated by the asymmetries of phrasing, the subtle gradations of color and dynamics, the non-uniform use of staccato articulation that he felt characterized Beecham's interpretations and gave the music that passed under his baton an inner life of great power and variety. Largely ignorant of the social history of Italian opera and its implications for the editorial processes through which nineteenth-century works were distributed in print, Vaughan was astonished to discover that the autograph manuscripts of certain works by Verdi and Puccini were significantly different from printed editions in circulation during the 1950s. Whereas printed editions offered relatively homogenous dynamics, articulation, and phrasing, the autograph manuscripts—read literally—showed marked asymmetries in phrasing, diverse gradations of dynamics, a selective use of accents, and so on.

For an admirer of Beecham's art, it seemed nothing short of a revelation. Convinced that his discoveries would prompt a reinterpretation of the art of these composers, Vaughan prepared an article called "Discrepancies Between the Verdi Autographs and Their Printed Editions," devoted to the *Messa da Requiem* and *Falstaff*, both of whose autograph manuscripts were available in excellent facsimiles. In his introduction Vaughan declared war on the Verdi interpretative tradition, and also on Verdi's editors at the publishing house Casa Ricordi:

> The purpose of this study, rigorously critical, conducted on some original autograph manuscripts of Verdi and on recent printed editions of these scores, is to underline the great importance of the musical signs written by Verdi himself, and therefore clearly felt and wanted by him, for all that concerns melody, harmony, tempos, dynamics, phrasing, accents, and articulation. Signs that, although perfectly evident in the original scores, strangely have not been reproduced in the printed editions of the operas in question.
>
> I give below some examples which will serve to demonstrate the enormous value that a critical edition of the works of Verdi might have, by following and reproducing with scrupulous observance the indications, quite precise, left by him. Let it be enough to point out that in the *Messa da Requiem* alone one can recognize as many as about 8,000 differences between the original and the print, while in *Falstaff* these differences mount up to 27,000.

Twenty-seven thousand differences! Vaughan's statements no sooner hit the press than an international furor erupted in the musical world.

FOR MANY YEARS a picture of Verdi graced the equivalent of the one-dollar bill in Italy, where he has served for more than a century as a national icon. His most famous melodies are still in the air, hummed and whistled by members of every social sphere. Even if mass access to Verdi's music today is largely through television commercials, the symbolic meaning of that music remains strong, and the hold over the popular imagination of a composition such as "*Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorati*," the chorus of the Hebrew slaves in *Nabucco*, extends well beyond its musical beauties.

Verdi's carefully self-constructed public image cast him forward as a leading figure in the movement for national independence, and his operas from the 1840s are filled with moments whose potential relevance to contemporaneous political situations was not lost on his compatriots. During the revolutionary uprisings of 1848, the composer went so far as to set a libretto of explicitly patriotic sentiments, *La battaglia di Legnano*, whose final act is titled "*Morire per la patria*." And the chorus in *Nabucco* continued to resonate in the minds and the spirits of the Italian people. When the Teatro alla Scala was reconstructed after the bombings of World War II, the first music that resounded through its halls, under the baton of Toscanini, was "*Va, pensiero*."

Thus it is not difficult to imagine the public reaction to the idea that Verdi's scores had been so severely misrepresented that there were twenty-seven thousand discrepancies between the composer's autograph of *Falstaff* and the opera's printed edition. In journalistic circles, "discrepancies" quickly became "errors," and heated letters and denunciations circulated throughout the European press. Vaughan produced letters of support from many musicians and conductors, while others—led by Gianandrea Gavazzeni—ridiculed his examples. At a special concert in Milan, the public was asked to compare passages performed according to the "traditional" versions of

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the printed scores with the same passages as sanctioned by Vaughan. Parliamentary debates were held in Rome, leading to the foundation of the Istituto di Studi Verdiani of Parma, one of the primary tasks of which was supposed to be the preparation of a critical edition of the composer's works.

And yet Vaughan's campaign for scholarly authenticity fizzled out. There were several reasons, some tactical, some substantive. By mounting a publicity barrage about his "discoveries" and indulging in astronomical numbers of "discrepancies," Vaughan offended Italian national honor. Worse, he emphasized time and again the brilliance of Sir Thomas Beecham and the parallels between Beecham's approach and what Vaughan thought he saw in the Verdi autographs, while explicitly criticizing the scores in use in Italy and implicitly claiming that the interpretations of Italian conductors lacked the inner life that only the great English conductor had been able to achieve. In response, Gavazzeni wrote:

> After the cataloguing of all that has allegedly been neglected in Verdi and altered in Puccini to the detriment of the composers' original inspiration and its expression in manuscript, what is Vaughan and with him the school for textual criticism and orchestral conducting of Sir Thomas Beecham trying to prove? Obviously that Toscanini and the other Italians after him who devoted their interpretive powers to the study of Verdi and Puccini mutilated the scores and betrayed the composers in their performances.

This is strong stuff, and Vaughan's credibility was inevitably damaged.

But three substantive problems were more significant: the terrain on which Vaughan joined battle, the logic of his argument, and his reading of the sources. By examining works for which Verdi is known to have participated in the editorial process (in however desultory a manner), Vaughan chose distinctly inhospitable ground. In the 1950s, nobody could accurately assess the extent of Verdi's participation in the editorial process for his late music, and the matter remains unresolved today. It is true that Puccini, another subject of Vaughan's polemic, certainly played a significant role in the printing of his own operas. Perhaps Puccini should never have abandoned the original, two-act version of *Madama Butterfly*; and perhaps he should not have depended on Toscanini to edit the dynamics and articulation in the printed full score of *Manon Lescaut*; and perhaps he should have reinstated the *canzone dei fiori* in *Suor Angelica*. Yet there is no evidence that this composer, who followed all stages in the dissemination of his works and often revised them for later productions, allowed fundamentally flawed printed editions to circulate.

COURTESY THAMES AND HUDSON

The score of "Nabucco" on the lap of Giuseppina Strepponi, who sang in the opera's premiere at La Scala in 1842

Thus Puccini's autograph manuscripts, however important they are for an understanding of his operas, cannot be considered a court of last resort when editing his music.

The logic of Vaughan's argument was equally problematic. From the generally true proposition that we should give great weight to signs actually written by Verdi in his manuscripts, Vaughan assumed that the absence of signs meant that the composer did not want them. This does not follow logically, nor does it reflect what we know about the preparation of autograph manuscripts by nineteenth-century Italian composers. And Vaughan proved to be a most inaccurate literalist in his reading of Verdi's autographs. He wrote, for example: "On this first page [of *Falstaff*] there are 125 discrepancies. On the first chord the *ff* is only for the oboes, bassoons, trumpets, and timpani, the first and second violins and the violas. The others are *f*." To which Gavazzeni responded: "Nothing and nobody will ever convince me that Verdi intended in the first bar to differentiate *ff* from *f* instrumental sections and instruments belonging to the same section." Quite apart from whether Gavazzeni could ever be convinced (and it is difficult not to agree with his musical instincts), Vaughan's list does not accurately reproduce the readings of Verdi's autograph, which has no sign for bassoons and trumpets but does have an unmistakable *ff* for cellos. The other instruments have no signs, and since when does the absence of a sign signify *f*?

The argument between Vaughan and Gavazzeni on the subject of slurs for one of the most beautiful phrases in Verdi's Requiem, the *Lacrimosa, dies illa*, is of breathtaking silliness. According to Vaughan: "Double phrasing; the melody is slurred in one part while the notes are separately articulated in the other. While the first bassoon, the solo tenor, the tenors of the chorus and the cellos, together with the third horn, have a singing legato, the third bassoon, the solo bass, and the basses of the chorus articulate the phrase. Verdi frequently uses this procedure, which was then copied also by Puccini. Thus, it is not an oversight of Verdi's." To which Gavazzeni retorted: "Just try humming the *Lacrimosa* staccato without slurring and then sing praises to the fetish of 'double phrasing.'"

In fact, neither Vaughan nor Gavazzeni looked carefully at either the musical situation or the musical sources. Vaughan's description of Verdi's crowded autograph is an idealization: apart from his frequent misreadings, "slurs" are often groups of slur fragments, and a change of manuscript page in the middle of the melody confuses the issue further. His explanation, too, is filled with absurdities: although Vaughan treats the first bassoon as an "upper" instrument and the third bassoon as a "lower" one, these identical instruments are playing in unison. The presence or the absence of slurs in Verdi's

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autograph is actually a function of available physical space: there was ample space for a full slur for the choral tenors, and so Verdi wrote it; there was no room for a slur for the choral basses, and so he omitted it. Above the staff for the first bassoon Verdi easily wrote a slur (actually two slur fragments, meeting in the middle of a held note); above the staff for the third bassoon there was no room.

Gavazzeni's self-satisfied sneer was no more justified. What neither realized was that the slurring of the *Lacrimosa, dies illa* melody in all Ricordi editions of the Requiem through the mid-1980s had been dead wrong. It is slurred in multiple ways in its various appearances, but the diversities are determined by page turns in the autograph manuscript and the division of the music into pages and systems in printed editions. No conductor with any musical sense ever paid any attention to those printed signs, and performers instinctively treated the melody as a legato phrase. Blinded by his theories, Vaughan failed to understand the nature of the problem; and Gavazzeni, accustomed to hearing the melody as a legato phrase, failed to realize that the printed edition was faulty.

Twenty-seven thousand errors like this? Not only did Italian musicians turn their collective back on Vaughan's claims, they conveniently identified "musical philology" and the campaign for "critical editions" with his ideas: if this is what scholars mean when they demand "critical editions," they said, let us return to our vaunted tradition. A chorus line of relieved conductors could sing in unison, "If it was good enough for Toscanini, it's good enough for me." Vaughan's challenge had been met, and one could believe again that commercially available scores of nineteenth-century Italian operas were trustworthy.

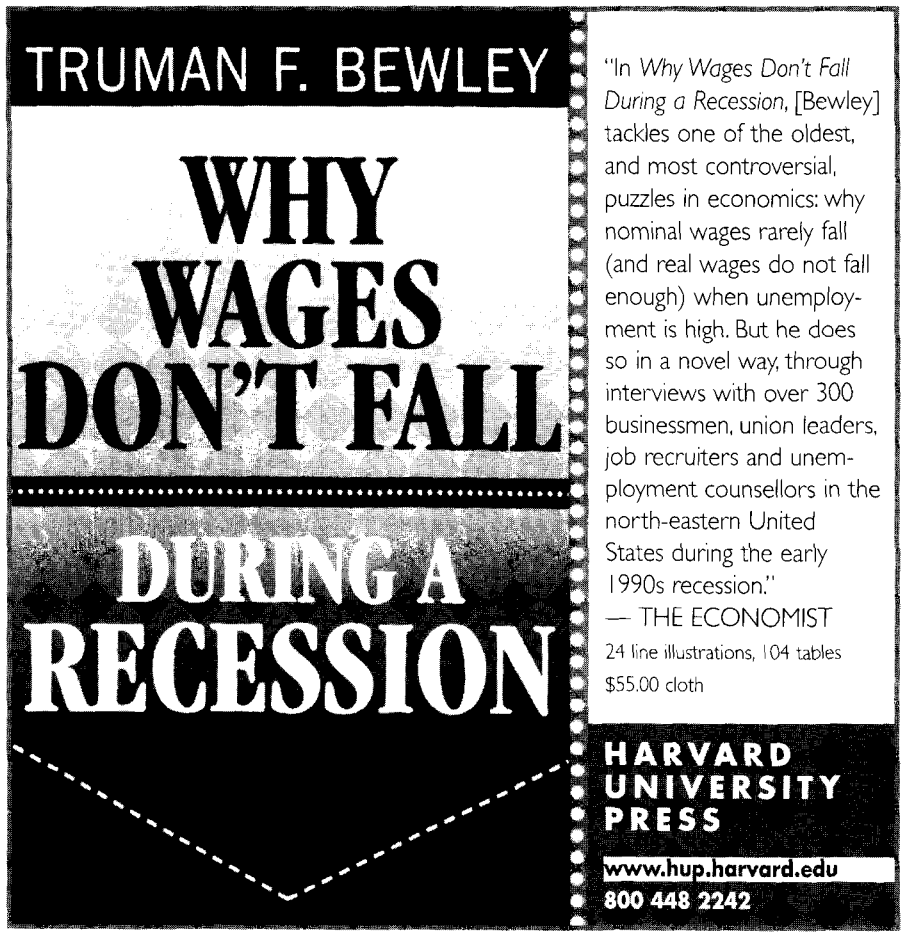
THERE MATTERS RESTED during the first part of the 1960s. Casa Ricordi, honestly believing that Vaughan's claims were without merit, found no pressing commercial reason to replace its editions, although the publisher did employ a local musician to correct obvious errors in the more popular operas. But meetings to establish a national edition of the works of Verdi led nowhere, because nobody knew where to begin. There were valuable biographical and critical studies pertaining to the composer, but no one had looked carefully at the manuscript sources or the printed editions, no one had analyzed Verdi's compositional process or his involvement in the performance history of his works, and no one had investigated his collaborations with his librettists. With the exception of the autograph manuscripts owned by Casa Ricordi, no one even knew which sources survived or where they were located.

Many people in the music world claim that during this period Casa Ricordi, anxious to avoid further scandals, grew selective about who was permitted to examine its archives. The opinion is so widespread that it is unlikely to be a complete fiction, but my own experience was different. When I arrived in Milan in the fall of 1966, a fresh-faced graduate student working on a doctoral dissertation, I was given access to the collection, and the personnel of Casa Ricordi never ceased to be helpful and interested far beyond what courtesy would require. And I was not alone. Intrigued by the Vaughan affair and nourished by a love for Italian opera, a group of young musicologists were patiently examining the sources of nineteenth-century Italian opera. They came from Italy, the United States, England, Germany, and New Zealand. They knew the impressive textual work being done on the new complete editions of the works of Bach and Mozart; they observed the Berlioz research in England, under the direction of Hugh Macdonald. Without crying scandal, these scholars began to turn their musicological training to Italian opera.

In light of the transformation in our knowledge over the past thirty years, it is difficult to imagine the spirit with which we began our work. I remember sitting in the reading room of the music department at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in autumn of 1965, studying for the first time a complete score of Rossini's *Maometto II*. What an extraordinary work, I thought—and what a shame that I will never hear it, let alone see it on stage. I can imagine a Donizetti scholar, such as William Ashbrook, having a similar experience. And there were young Verdians, such as David Lawton and David Rosen, who became aware that Verdi left far more music for his operas (suppressed scenes, revisions, alternative arias) than printed editions contained. This scholarly work was beginning to constitute a foundation over which the question of critical editions of Italian opera could again be addressed when the time grew ripe.

II.

WE HONOR ARTISTS of the past by celebrating the centennials and other anniversaries of their births and deaths. The major celebration related to Italian opera during the 1960s was the hundredth anniversary of the death of Rossini. In 1968, Rossini was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a one-opera composer. To be sure, everyone knew that he had written some forty operas, and there had been occasional twentieth-century revivals under Vittorio Gui. The Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in the early 1950s gave hearings to *Armida* (for Maria Callas), *Tancredi*, and *La donna del lago*; and Gavazzeni directed *Il Turco in Italia* (again with Callas). But in the minds of the public, Rossini was *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Figaro, Figaro, Figaro....

When plans were laid for celebrating the centennial of the composer's death, it was to that opera that almost everyone turned. A young Italian conductor named Alberto Zedda was called upon to lead one of those revivals. During an earlier stay in America (as a conductor at the New York City Opera and a faculty member at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music), he had directed a number of performances of *Il barbiere*. Several American wind players complained about peculiar readings in their parts, awkward melodic lines, unlikely rhythms. Since the Ricordi archives had no manuscript of the opera, Zedda decided to check these readings directly with Rossini's autograph manuscript, which is preserved at the Bologna Conservatory.

Seeking neither scandal nor publicity (the Vaughan fiasco was still smoldering), Zedda carried his score of the opera from Milan to Bologna, together with instrumental parts rented from Ricordi, on which he planned to enter his emendations. Having never before examined an autograph by Rossini (or any other composer), he had no points of comparison. Unable to identify securely Rossini's hand, he believed the *recitativo secco* in *Il barbiere* to be by Rossini, whereas those pages are actually in other hands. He did not know that Rossini had later prepared additional music for his work, which premiered in Rome in 1816; nor was Zedda aware of several Rossini manuscripts containing cadenzas and variations. Faced with serious textual cruxes, he was thrown back upon his own resources, those of an intelligent musician with limited knowledge of Rossini's other works.

But there was so much to see that quibbles over details faded away. The Ricordi edition was fundamentally different from Rossini's manuscript: melodic lines were changed, rhythms modified, harmonies altered, orchestration transformed. Extra brass and percussion had been added. Where Rossini called for a piccolo, the edition substituted a flute. Signs of articulation (slurs, staccati, accents) were unrecognizable. It is not that Rossini's manuscript was structurally different from the printed edition: however much the opera may have been performed with disfiguring cuts, the printed edition was essentially complete. The differences, rather, were in the tissues and the sinews of the opera. Perplexed, disbelieving, Zedda entered into his score and parts as many modifications as possible, performed his corrected version of the opera, and returned the rented materials to the publisher.

Since a publisher must rent the same set of orchestral parts to various conductors and opera houses, rental contracts specify that materials must be returned in good condition. Zedda's parts were so heavily marked up that no other conductor could have used them, and so Ricordi did what any self-respecting publisher would have done: they billed him for the cost of the materials he had rendered useless. Zedda protested: the Ricordi materials were not Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, but a deformation of it. From an Australian conductor concerned with contradictory slurs and seeking publicity, such charges might be rejected; but here was an Italian conductor demonstrating the problems on page after page of the score in the privacy of Ricordi's Milan offices.

UNBEKNOWNST TO ZEDDA and Ricordi, many scholars and musicians were fully aware of these problems. In 1864 a Florentine publisher, Giovanni Guidi, had issued a full score of the opera based strictly (even too strictly) on the autograph manuscript, which had been willed to the library of the Bologna Conservatory in 1862 by Rinaldo Bajetti, a Bolognese lawyer and Rossini's friend. Guidi's score was reissued several times, including by a New York publisher, Broude Brothers, which further corrected it on the basis of a good manuscript of the opera in the New York Public Library (believed, erroneously, to be in Rossini's hand). Vittorio Gui, as always a knowledgeable Rossinian, had developed his own more accurate score of the work. Side by side with these scores, however, there circulated the Ricordi edition—the version considered "traditional," the version adopted by most theaters, the version that Zedda had corrected. Whence did this score derive? How could these two versions of *Il barbiere* be reconciled? Since no one had a response, it was simpler for Ricordi to continue shipping its materials around the world.

Finally convinced that a problem did exist, and confident that Zedda could produce a score that was both faithful to Rossini's autograph and acceptable to performers, Ricordi entrusted him with preparing a critical edition of Rossini's opera. Published at the end of 1969, Ricordi's belated contribution to the Rossini centennial, it was the first critical edition of a nineteenth-century Italian opera ever issued. Whatever its faults, Zedda's *Barbiere* had the undisputed merit of having tackled with seriousness a difficult, even intractable task. In particular, Zedda was able to show that contemporary manuscripts and printed editions of the opera followed almost without exception the basic outlines of Rossini's original score. There were lacunae, and there were rare substitutions: Bartolo's hilarious aria *"Ad un dottor della mia sorte"* was sometimes replaced by the simpler (and musically inferior) *"Manca un folgio,"* written in 1816 by Pietro Romani. Also there were small changes in the orchestration: pizzicato cellos accompanied the Count's *"Ecco ridente in cielo"* in a few manuscripts, reflecting the practice of theaters with no access to a guitar; and Rossini's articulation was copied incompletely and inaccurately, while his rhythms were invariably simplified—eloquent testimony that contemporary copyists made fewer strokes of the pen wherever possible. Still, contemporary manuscripts and printed editions otherwise reflect the text of the opera as the composer notated it in his autograph manuscript.

ABOUT THE SO-CALLED "traditional" version of the opera Zedda was less incisive. He stated that its readings, "even if they may have been produced and taken hold while Rossini was alive, find no confirmation in a written source." In fact, there is no evidence that anything resembling the Ricordi material was in use during Rossini's lifetime. For the "traditional" *Barbiere* was a deformed version that had been prepared long after Rossini's death, for reasons that may have seemed pressing at the time but have no validity today: filling out Rossini's chamber-like orchestration with heavier sounds; avoiding Rossini's characteristic use of the piccolo; facilitating the process whereby Rosina became a twittering soprano rather than a Rossinian contralto/mezzo-soprano.

Later Zedda suggested that this version dates from approximately 1885, when Ricordi, instead of seeking out Rossini's original, printed a full score that reproduced one being used for performances at the Teatro alla Scala of Milan. Rossini had nothing to do with Milan after 1840, nor did he pay any attention to La Scala and its practices. Thus the pre-1968 Ricordi materials, rather than reflecting a long-standing performance tradition, merely reflect a lamentable editorial decision at a particular historical moment to print an easily available score of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* rather than search out Rossini's manuscript. Even Zedda's critical edition

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has not completely erased the devastating effect of that decision on the performance history of Rossini's opera.

III.

CRITICAL EDITIONS OF musical works are fundamentally different from those of literary works. While the critical edition of a poem or a novel can be read with pleasure, its details dissected by the devoted scholar, its obscurities and its curiosities enjoyed by the informed amateur, a critical edition of a musical work is not intended for the library or the study alone. It is intended to be used as the basis for performances. When the work is as much a part of the popular imagination as *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, the first performance based on a new edition can become a cultural event. In 1968, the Teatro alla Scala was the site, an extraordinary cast was assembled (featuring Teresa Berganza as Rosina), Jean-Pierre Ponnelle was the stage director, and the man entrusted with bringing the new *Barbiere* to light was the rising star of Italian conductors, Claudio Abbado.

Abbado at that moment was a figure of controversy. Having become interested in Bellini's setting of the Romeo and Juliet story, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, he prepared a new performing edition of the opera. He altered the arrangement of the voices by substituting a tenor as Romeo for the mezzo-soprano required by Bellini, who had followed a tradition to which many Rossinian *opere serie* (*Tancredi*, *La donna del lago*, *Semiramide*) belong. Abbado's aim was comprehensible: he wanted to revive Bellini's opera in a way that the public might more easily accept, since few works being performed during the 1960s featured female heroes *en travesti*. (I will never forget the conversation of two elderly women during a performance of Rossini's *Bianca e Falliero* at Greater Miami Opera in 1988, before supertitles had transformed audience understanding. "Do you see what I see?" one whispered to the other. "Two women ... making love....")

But Bellini's score was not so easily manipulated. He had planned the music with certain effects of sonority, and a tenor Romeo was decidedly not what he had in mind. Perhaps the most impressive moment in the opera occurs at the end of the first act's finale, when, from opposite sides of the stage, the forcibly separated Giulietta and Romeo sing in unison an extraordinary Bellinian melody, "*Se ogni speme è a noi rapita*," over a *sotto voce* staccato accompaniment from male soloists and the all-male chorus. The significance and the beauty of the passage lies in those two female voices, lost in each other, soaring over the male ensemble, intoning a melodic idea that goes on and on in ever inventive and rhythmically subtle detail, thirty-one measures of continuous melody. ("*Lungo, lungo, lungo*," as Verdi described Bellini's lengthy melodies.) Substitute a tenor for the second woman's voice and the magic is lost.

The implications of the revised vocal scoring were broader still. In an opera as dependent upon ensembles as *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, Bellini's delicate web of vocal parts unravels when Romeo is recast as a tenor. In their duet, Romeo and Tebaldo (the latter played by the young Luciano Pavarotti in Abbado's production) frequently sing in parallel sixths, with Romeo above Tebaldo. One cannot transpose Romeo down an octave and hope for acceptable results: the music is not conceived for two male voices in thirds.

NOR DID ABBADO'S interventions stop with the vocal parts. Despite Bellini's considerable talents, he was far less expert in handling orchestral sonority than Rossini or Donizetti. The autograph manuscripts are replete with alterations that suggest insecurity, not an idealized search for perfection. The resulting sound is often heavy, for Bellini began with a larger orchestra than Rossini's and kept most instruments playing too much of the time. Similar problems are not unknown to the German symphonic tradition. Should orchestras today play Schumann's symphonies or a revision of them by another composer or conductor? Schumann was an active participant in the first performances of these works, working directly with his conductor (Felix Mendelssohn) and making alterations where he felt artistic results obtained during rehearsals and performances were unsatisfactory.

Bellini had similar responsibilities: he was contractually required to rehearse his new operas and to participate in their first three performances. The sound was verified directly in the theater by the composer. If we think that Bellini's operas are worth performing, then they are arguably worth performing as they were conceived, with problems of balance resolved through careful control of orchestral size and seating, the use of dynamic gradations, and so on. (Performances with "early" instruments may be fascinating, but they do not make these problems go away.) But Abbado chose instead to "revise" Bellini's orchestration, and his interventions were present on every page of the score.

Abbado's score of Bellini's work might have circulated in this form had not the dean of Italian music critics, Fedele d'Amico, blown the whistle. In a sharply worded article he deplored the operation, lamenting that Bellini's beautiful opera lay fallow while this pointless "revision" was allowed to circulate. Abbado apparently was stung by the criticism. His edition of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* was withdrawn from circulation shortly thereafter; and when the first performance of a nineteenth-century Italian opera based on a critical edition was planned for La Scala, it was Abbado who took command.

HIS *BARBIERE* WAS a revolutionary reading of the opera. Not only did Abbado employ the critical edition, but he adhered to the text with almost fanatical strictness. No significant cuts were sanctioned, and few ornaments were permitted. This was a performance with a message: Rossini was to be presented at a level of seriousness and precision usually reserved for the German masters. The slapstick antics that the work had endured for decades were replaced by a clean, precise, and eminently funny staging by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, in which physical action emerged from the music. The singing was elegant, while the precision of the orchestral execution brought out every detail of the Rossinian palette.

Yet not everyone approved. Isolated voices, paying no heed to the evidence of the sources and insisting on a "tradition" invented at the end of the nineteenth century, preferred the old version. (As late as 1990 Giuseppe Patané made it a point of honor that his recording of the opera did not use the critical edition.) And there was the more complicated objection of those who wondered whether this was how a Rossini opera should be performed. Did purging the opera of the vocal fireworks that coloratura sopranos had appended to melodic lines never written for them in the first place also mean that a mezzo-soprano Rosina or a contralto Rosina was compelled to sing only the notes printed in the score? Did eliminating traditional licenses (speeding up, slowing down, introducing pauses for stage business) also mean that the music had to be performed with quasi-metronomic regularity?

Abbado's performance had been technically perfect, but still there were complaints that it lacked the wit and the vivacity that characterized Rossini's art. And in a transference that has become standard, uncertainties about the performance grew into doubts about the edition. Is that what it meant to use a "critical edition"? Did the new edition encourage, or even require, this kind of performance? Was spirit the price of scholarship?

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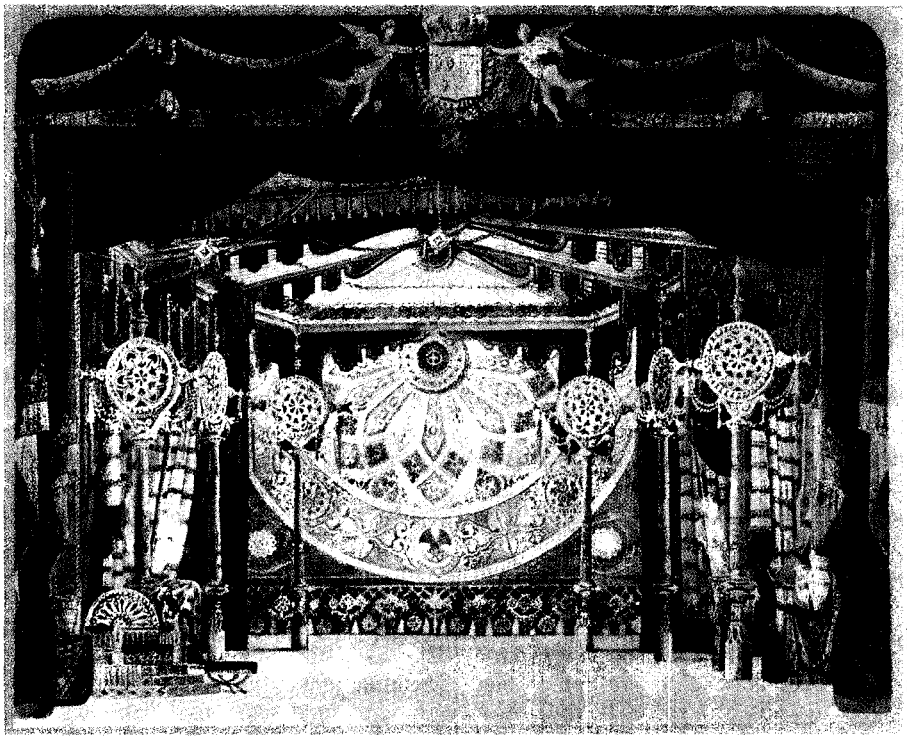
IV.

ONE YEAR LATER a different Rossinian production graced the same theater. The work was *L'assedio di Corinto*, and it was given under the direction of Thomas Schippers. It also marked the debut at La Scala of two of the greatest American singers of our time, Beverly Sills and Marilyn Horne. With several changes in the score and cast (and, sadly, without the presence of Horne), this production was imported to New York five years later for the arrival of Sills in the promised land of the Metropolitan Opera, after her two decades wandering in the desert of the New York City Opera. Schippers and his colleagues subjected Rossini's score to alterations far worse than those imposed by Abbado on *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. Although they did not reorchestrate the music, they cut and rearranged so much of it that large parts of the opera were unrecognizable. From a serious work of music drama they concocted a showpiece for two prima donnas.

L'assedio di Corinto, or *The Siege of Corinth*, has a complicated history. Originally written as *Maometto II* for the Teatro San Carlo of Naples in 1820, Rossini revised it for Venice in 1822, and in 1826 he used it as the source for *Le Siège de Corinthe*, his first opera in French. This version was then translated back into Italian as *L'assedio di Corinto*. But the versions performed by Schippers at La Scala and the Met were not merely this retranslation into Italian of Rossini's French opera, but a confused blend of the various versions, to which was added an extraneous piece (from a revision of the opera by another composer) to favor even more the part of the soprano.

The original *Maometto II* and *Le Siège de Corinthe* are both coherent works of art, but they are very different. The unusual dramaturgical and musical design of *Maometto II*, Rossini's most innovative Italian serious opera, must have seemed bewildering to his contemporaries, even among the relatively sophisticated public of Naples. What Rossini calls a *terzettone* in his autograph manuscript—a big, fat trio—is a continuous musical composition that occupies almost a third of the first act. Anna's heroic scene at the end of the second act opens with some of the most difficult and expressive florid music that Rossini ever wrote, but instead of concluding with an elaborate rondo, the opera's final moments witness the arrival of the Turkish forces, Anna's abrupt suicide, and the shocked reaction of Maometto and the rest of the cast.

In the best Neoclassical tradition, *Maometto II* is a tragedy of love and honor, focused on four principal characters: Paolo Erisso, a tenor, the leader of the Venetian colony at Negroponte; Anna, a soprano, his daughter; Calbo, a contralto *en travesti*, a Venetian warrior in love with Anna; and Maometto II, a bass, the leader of the besieging Turkish forces. Anna and Maometto had fallen in love at an earlier time and a different place, with Maometto in disguise; but now they must play out their personal story in hopeless circumstances. She betrays her beloved in order to save her father and her people, weds Calbo (whom she respects but does not love), and ultimately kills herself before her mother's tomb.



COURTESY ELECTA

"The Tent of Mohammed," from the first production of "Le Siège de Corinthe," in Paris in 1826

In *Le Siège de Corinthe*, Rossini transformed his Neapolitan masterpiece into a French grand opera, heir to Spontini, precursor to Meyerbeer. The protagonists become Greeks and Turks instead of Venetians and Turks, to reflect the political events of the 1820s; but this was the least significant alteration. The vocal lines of the Italian original were greatly simplified, following the more declamatory style in use at the Opéra in Paris. In further homage to French traditions, Rossini expanded the spectacular elements of the score. Choruses, dances, and pantomimes often overwhelm those elements of the tragedy that remain from *Maometto II*. A scene of prophecy for a new character, Hiéros, and a group of Greek soldiers, invoking Marathon, exalting martyrdom and promising a glorious future for Greece, foretell the conclusion of *Le Siège*, a mass suicide rather than the individual suicide of Anna. Almost every detail of this scene was imitated by Verdi in the well-known passage that concludes the third act of *Nabucco*.

These alterations in dramaturgy were accompanied by changes in the solo roles. Heroic parts *en travesti* were not acceptable in French opera; hence the contralto role of Calbo was transformed into the tenor Néocles. Since Calbo's original aria ("*Non temer: d'un basso affetto*," with its cabaletta "*E d'un trono alla speranza*") is a quintessential solo for coloratura contralto, and absolutely inappropriate for a tenor, Rossini replaced it with a new aria for Néocles. But rather than lose the Calbo aria altogether, the composer modified its cabaletta for the soprano (now called Pamyra) and allowed it to conclude her major aria (derived from the incomplete aria that Anna had sung at the end of *Maometto II*), which in *Le Siège* opens the second of the opera's three acts. Then, in order to provide solo music for Pamyra near the end, before the mass suicide, Rossini inserted the prayer for Anna that had been included within the *terzettone* from *Maometto II*.

While most scholars and performers are convinced that *Maometto II* is musically and dramatically more powerful than *Le Siège de Corinthe*, there are legitimate reasons to favor one opera or the other. But Schippers tried to merge the two. His fundamental error was to imagine that *Le Siège* could be performed with

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a contralto (Horne) as Néocles and a high soprano (Sills) as Pamyra. Each decision had unhappy ramifications. By reintroducing the hero *en travesti* into a French opera written for tenor, Schippers found himself forced to turn to *Maometto II* to find appropriate music for Horne's aria. The resulting piece was monstrously large, and it was constructed on the assumption that more is better (the kitchen sink principle, we might call it), drawing freely on music written for both Calbo and Néocles.

The presence of a coloratura contralto in *Le Siège* compromised the work's overall shift to a simpler vocal style. With Néocles now reassigned Calbo's original cabaletta, the Pamyra aria at the beginning of the second act suddenly found itself without a concluding movement. What should one do? Choose a cabaletta, of course, any cabaletta, and stick it in. Sills sang one from *Ciro in Babilonia*, an opera written by Rossini early in 1812, with a ludicrous result. From the elaborate orchestral web of Rossini at his most mature, the sound suddenly dissolves into the Cimarosan ideal of his youth. And as if that were not sufficient, Sills vocalized along with the rambunctious orchestral theme between the two statements of the cabaletta theme, strewing high notes hither and yon. Bubbles needed to have *something* to sing, after all, since her effective tessitura was so much higher than what Rossini wrote for either Anna or Pamyra.

Despite this travesty of the music of Rossini, the ladies sang their hearts out, and *L'assedio di Corinto* was a triumph for the prima donnas. In the case of Marilyn Horne, it was also a revelation of what Rossini's vocal lines could be when sung by an artist with the requisite technical skills. Still, just as voices were raised against Abbado's *Barbiere*, many protested this operation. Few knew the opera well, of course, and almost no one had even a passing acquaintance with *Maometto II*; but a vocal score of *L'assedio* was available from Ricordi, and some had even heard the reprise of the opera early in the 1950s, with a young Renata Tebaldi as Pamyra. I threw in my two bits at a well-attended public lecture at the New York Public Library at Lincoln Center the night before the opening, to which many music critics flocked. For my pains I earned this barb from Sills: "Some so-called musicologists remind me of middle-aged men who talk about sex."

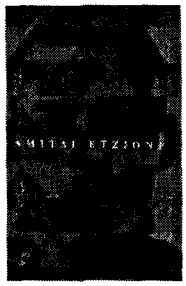
The contrast between Abbado's *Barbiere* and Schippers's *Assedio* embodies two extreme approaches to the performance of Italian opera. For the one, the text of an edition, especially a "critical edition," is sacrosanct and must be respected in every detail; for the other, an opera is an entertainment and can be freely manipulated as long as the result is a good show. Since the music of Rossini was largely unknown and unknowable during the late 1960s, the second approach seemed feasible. But the uproar that greeted the La Scala revival of *L'assedio di Corinto* had one important result: it helped give impetus to the formation of the *Edizione critica delle opere di Gioachino Rossini*.

V.

It was a stroke of good fortune that, after the Vaughan skirmishes, the real battle for critical editions of nineteenth-century Italian opera and a revitalized performance practice to go with them was engaged first on Rossinian soil. After all, neither audiences nor musicians had much knowledge of *Tancredi*, *La donna del lago*, *Il Turco in Italia*, or *Il viaggio a Reims*. The appearance of new editions became a cause for rejoicing: singers and conductors accepted them readily, and audiences were delighted to hear what amounted to new works. An occasional crotchety critic (particularly one who disliked the *bel canto* repertory anyway) might snort something about "scholarship," but know-nothingism has never seemed a worthy platform.

When the terrain shifted back again to the operas of Giuseppe Verdi, however, howls of anguish and even anger arose from some quarters, and studied indifference from others. The more familiar the work, the stronger the reaction. A belief in the rectitude, the sanctity, of what is perceived to be a modern performance tradition spills over into a belief that the printed text lays equal claim to validity. This confusion is at the heart of many contemporary controversies about editing and performing the music of Verdi. And the name around which these controversies have swarmed for almost three decades is that of Riccardo Muti.

With a rigorous approach to the scores that overshadows even the legendary Toscanini, Muti's Verdi is inextricably allied with the search for a re-conceptualized performance practice of Italian opera. More than any other Italian conductor, he has been closely tied to a strict reading of the printed score. Yet this "cause of fidelity," as Muti has defined it, "must not be understood as the cold reproduction of a text, but as an intuitive interpretation through the written signs of a whole spiritual world that exists beyond the written signs." This spiritual position is achieved by insisting on integral performances and by refusing to allow singers "traditional" liberties and interpolations.



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When the works involved were tangential to the repertory, Muti's approach won a chorus of approval. His *Guglielmo Tell* at the Maggio Musicale in 1972, although sung in Italian and based on a problematic edition, was a revelation. Yes, the work lasted more than five hours, and one had to be in optimal physical and mental condition simply to attend. Yes, it was performed in an execrable nineteenth-century translation, when it should have been done in the original French. Yes, the tenor Nicolai Gedda, as appropriate a choice for the role of Arnold as was possible at that time, bowed out before the end of the run. All this is true, but perfection is something that we seek, not something that we attain. Muti's rendering of Rossini's *William Tell* for the first time clarified for a modern listener the fascination that Rossini's last opera had for nineteenth-century musicians.

With the works of Verdi, matters were very different. Whatever else anyone may or may not have heard in Florence when Muti directed *Il trovatore* in December 1977 at the Teatro Comunale, all that anyone talked about was the end of "*Di quella pira*," the aria that concludes the third act. The reason was that Muti's Manrico did not sing the high C traditionally interpolated to bring down the curtain amid a storm of applause. Indeed, the production has gone down in public consciousness and critical lore as Muti's defiant challenge to the contemporary performing tradition, the "*Trovatore* without a high C." (A similar reaction emerged when he conducted the same opera to open the 2000–2001 season at La Scala.)

It was, in fact, much more. The American Verdi scholar David Lawton had taken the initial steps toward preparing the critical edition of the opera (which was ultimately published in 1993), carefully controlling the printed text of the Ricordi edition then in commerce with Verdi's manuscript. A control of this kind is a crucial part of the process of preparing a critical edition, identifying errors and misreadings and clarifying the meaning of a composer's notation. But the efforts of Lawton, Muti, the singers, the orchestra, and the production team were overshadowed: everything dissolved into the hullabaloo over the high C.

What makes the controversy particularly absurd is that the high C in question never existed in *any* printed edition of the opera. The great moment is in fact an interpolation. In this respect, Lawton's edition of the opera was unchanged with respect to the older printed edition. Muti's insistence that the interpolated note not be sung, however, marked not only his performance, but also Lawton's edition, which became "the edition of *Il trovatore* without a high C." But why should anyone care so much? Does it really make such a difference if the tenor ascends to that note rather than remaining on the G, as in Verdi's written text?

Looking exclusively at the end of the aria, the interpolated note is nothing but harmless pyrotechnics. As assertive a cabaletta as Verdi ever wrote, the piece closes the third act, brings down the curtain, and precipitously moves the opera to the final catastrophe. Verdi's conclusion demonstrates his wish to preserve an unusual level of tension. Manrico would ordinarily have ended the aria by descending from the G of "*All'armi*" to the lower C. Instead Verdi holds the voice on the G so that Manrico concludes on the fifth of the C major chord, while the first tenors take the E below it and the second tenors and the basses sing middle C. The result is a full tonic triad, with Manrico alone on the highest note.

Why did Verdi not intensify this effect further, by giving C, E, and G to the male chorus, with Manrico free to ascend to high C? Musical analysis, which can be invoked to support all sides of an argument, is painfully unsuited to this kind of question. But here is a relatively simple explanation—a historical explanation, not a musical one. Verdi wrote the role of Manrico for Carlo Baucardé, a tenor whose range it presumably reflects. The part has a high tessitura, sitting for long stretches in the sixth between middle C and high A, but A (which recurs frequently) is the highest note that Verdi expected Manrico easily to sing. Only at a single point in the opera does the composer notate a high B-flat for Manrico, in the context of the stretta that concludes the first-act trio; and to avoid interrupting the octaves being sung by Manrico and the prima donna, Verdi gave the tenor a choice: either B-flat (the only time in the opera) or the lower D-flat, should the singer be unable to handle the higher pitch. Baucardé, in short, had no high C, no high B, and only a most uncertain high B-flat.

It is quite irrelevant whether or not Verdi actually told the singer Enrico Tamberlick, who had boasted of the success of his high C with the public, "Far be it from me to deny the public what it wants. Put in the high C if you like, provided it is a good one." The real disaster of the interpolated high C is its effect on the choice of an appropriate tenor to sing the role of Manrico. For the sine qua non for an opera house today, as it casts the part, has become the ability of a tenor to let loose a stentorian high C at the end of "*Di quella pira*." The interpolated note has come to dominate the conception of the part, and everything else is planned around an effect that Verdi never intended. To produce the high C, moreover, singers generally cut the cabaletta by half and omit the notes that they should be singing with the chorus, so as to preserve breath and energy for the holy final pitch.

At the time of Muti's *Trovatore* in Florence, one Italian critic commented that the high C, even if not written by Verdi, was a gift that the people had given to Verdi. This bit of sentimentality hides the basic issue: whether Manrico does or does not bellow his high C is of little artistic importance. What is artistically devastating is that the perceived need to hit the stratospheric note has transformed our conception of the role. Give me a tenor who can sing Manrico as Verdi conceived the part and chooses to add a ringing high C, and I will join the *loggione* in applauding him. Failing that, let Manrico, in Rossini's famous words to the same Tamberlick, leave his high C on the hat rack, to be picked up on his way out of the theater.

VI.

The opening of the operatic season at La Scala on December 8, the day honoring the city's patron saint, Sant'Ambrogio, is Italy's most keenly awaited musical event each year. "Scala supplements" are published in the major newspapers; what the Italians call the *cronaca* pages report gleefully on those members of the government and society likely to be in attendance, and what they will be wearing; protest movements (involving party politics or animal rights) know that their activities will be publicized. Through all the social trappings, some attention is even paid to the music. The performances of Verdi's *Ernani* at La Scala for Sant'Ambrogio in 1982 were particularly in the public eye: it was the first time that this prestigious event was to be entrusted to Riccardo Muti.

For weeks before the premiere, the word *filologia* ("philology") was tossed around by critics and the public. For this Muti was more than a little responsible. Just before the performance he told *Corriere della Sera*: "This will be the *Ernani* of Giuseppe Verdi, that is, an edition extremely faithful to the manuscript, without cuts; the opera will be performed exactly as it was conceived." This was a peculiar statement. First of all, Muti used the manuscript of *Ernani* largely to investigate only a single issue. The score that he employed was the standard edition, prepared by Ricordi at the end of the nineteenth century, with more than its share of mistakes and misreadings. Muti could have justifiably talked about a performance "extremely faithful to the Ricordi

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edition," but hardly about fidelity to Verdi's autograph.

BUT THERE WAS another, graver problem. What does it mean to perform an opera "exactly as it was conceived"? How do we know how a work was conceived? We cannot ask Verdi how he conceived *Ernani*. Perhaps we must settle for something far more banal: choose an edition derived as closely as possible from authentic sources, and then use that edition as the basis for a performance, bringing to bear what the composer wrote down, and other historical information, and our knowledge about performances that Verdi himself directed, and our awareness of modern performing traditions, and—most of all—our own musical and dramaturgical intuitions. In any event, the claim to an "*Ernani* at La Scala the way Verdi wanted it" was imprudent under the best of circumstances.

Just as a polemic about a single note characterized Muti's *Trovatore* in Florence, a single piece served as the lightning rod for his *Ernani* in Milan: the cabaletta for Silva, "*Infin che un brando vindice*," just before the first-act finale. The piece was not in the original version of the work, which was performed at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice on March 9, 1844. Although this movement is included in most editions of the opera, Muti decided to omit it. He set forth his reasons in the same *Corriere della Sera* interview:

> Just recently I happened upon a vocal score from the second half of the nineteenth century, in which the cabaletta for the bass, *Infin che un brando vindice*, is missing. My curiosity aroused, to keep faith with my rigor and my philological scruples I decided to examine Verdi's manuscript: from Casa Ricordi I obtained a copy of the original and I had confirmation that the cabaletta is not there. Driven, as always, by a need to return to the sources and to arrive at the truth of the written sign, I sought documentation by calling on the musicologist Francesco Degrada and consulting the book of Julian Budden. These explain clearly that almost certainly the cabaletta is not by Verdi and was inserted for the first time by the bass Ignazio Marini, who sang it in the autumn of 1844 in Milan.
>
> At the time the critic of a Milanese paper reacted negatively, going so far as to protest strongly this abusively inserted cabaletta and to hold Marini (then a well-known bass) responsible for having introduced it into the opera. Having verified this, I also found the answer to a problem that had been disturbing me: why was it that the [arias for the] soprano, tenor, and bass had both cantabiles and cabalettas, while the baritone alone had no cabaletta, leaving the relationship among the four unbalanced? There was the answer in Verdi's original manuscript: the soprano and tenor had both a cantabile and cabaletta, but neither the bass nor the baritone had a cabaletta. I thus decided to follow the precise indications of the composer and to omit a passage almost certainly not by Verdi or, at least, of which there is no trace in the original manuscript.

Notice the uneasy slippage here between analytical explanation and philology. For the former, do we really know how many characters in a "typical" Italian opera of 1845 have multi-partite arias and how many have arias in a single tempo? For the latter, Degrada and Budden are much more cautious than Muti: they describe factors that might suggest the piece is by Verdi and others that suggest it is not, leaving the matter open.

But a performance does not have the luxury of being indecisive. Silva cannot proceed to the footlights and explain the situation to the audience: "Ladies and gentlemen, we are not sure whether the cabaletta that follows in some sources is really by Verdi, so I'm going to *(a)* sing it or *(b)* leave it out." And the glamour of opening night at La Scala blends poorly with uncertainty. Muti took a legitimate doubt and made an entirely plausible artistic decision: after all, composers of Italian opera in the nineteenth century frequently were called upon to make just such decisions for particular occasions on practical grounds, to meet the needs of theaters and singers. And then the conductor buttressed his decision with claims that it was philologically motivated and analytically just. Rumors circulated widely in Milan that the real motivation for omitting the cabaletta was the inability of an aging Nicolai Ghiaurov to sing it well.

By the time of the old Spanish grandee's entrance toward the end of the first act, the opening-night audience at La Scala was already hostile to the staging by Luca Ronconi and the sets of Ezio Frigerio, whose price was the subject of vociferous debate and whose awkward multiple levels subjected the singers to unaccustomed gymnastics. The singers in turn reacted with a tentative performance that did not sit well with *mélomanes* in the audience. Finally Silva appeared and sang his cantabile, "*Infelice, e tu credevi*." As he attacked the finale, omitting "*Infin che un brando vindice*," a cry was heard from the recesses of the theater: "*La cabaletta, filologo!*" The last word was spat out with palpable scorn. Muti dug in his heels and carried on.

The incident was worthy of the theater of the absurd. Ostensibly, Muti acted with philological responsibility by omitting the cabaletta, while the gallery patrons demonstrated their attachment to the "traditional" way of singing *Ernani*. But in truth all of them got it wrong. What the *loggionisti* did not understand was that in the performing tradition of *Ernani*, the Silva cabaletta was usually omitted. Although it is present in Ricordi materials (which, as so often, take their cue from a Milanese production), in most extant copies the music is firmly crossed out. And Muti erred in not understanding that the music he actually performed was a philologist's nightmare, an erroneous conflation of separate versions.

Whoever introduced the cabaletta into Verdi's score also felt it necessary to modify the preceding two bars of music. When Ricordi first printed string parts of the opera soon after its premiere, they followed Verdi's autograph, without the Silva cabaletta. When the string parts were reprinted to include the cabaletta, Ricordi modified the two previous bars. Parts for winds, brass, and percussion for *Ernani* were first printed in the 1880s, and they contain only the modified bars introducing the cabaletta. Each version has its own musical and harmonic integrity. What Verdi never intended, however, was the version played at La Scala.

Muti performed the bars that were rewritten in order to introduce the cabaletta, and then he cut the cabaletta. Philology indeed! But he was hardly alone in having made this mistake. Ever since Ricordi re-did the parts, there was no way to perform Verdi's own music, and everyone who omitted the Silva cabaletta fell into the same trap. Only when the critical edition of *Ernani* became available was it possible to perform the music either as Verdi had originally written it or with the added cabaletta. Performances, by their very nature, cannot pretend to be philological: that is the purpose of editions.

Subsequent research has clarified much of the history of "*Infin che un brando vindice*." The cabaletta is indeed by Verdi—but he did not write it for *Ernani*. It was composed at the request of Marini for insertion into a revival in Barcelona in 1842 of Verdi's first opera, *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*. Roger Parker first identified the Spanish libretto, which includes the relevant text; and Claudio Gallico, in the preface to the critical edition of *Ernani*, transcribed the letter from Verdi to Marini that accompanied the manuscript on its voyage to Barcelona. It should come as no surprise, then, that it was the same Marini who intro-

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duced *"Infin che un brando vindice"* into *Ernani*. What we still do not know is whether Verdi gave his blessing to the operation or merely tolerated it.

By the time of the *Ernani* follies at La Scala, there was good reason to hope that similar problems might be easier to avoid in the future. The University of Chicago Press and Casa Ricordi had announced their intention to publish *The Works of Giuseppe Verdi* in new critical editions, and the inaugural volume in the series, *Rigoletto*, was about to appear. The conductor who first used the new *Rigoletto* in the theater was the conductor who had demonstrated how deeply he cared about the issues that it sought to address: Riccardo Muti.

THE WORDS "critical edition" strike a mixture of scorn and terror into the hearts of many conductors, singers, and music administrators. Their reaction is comprehensible: musicians have enough to do preparing a performance of a work without being told that the printed scores that they are using are inaccurate or incomplete. The less they need to think about such problems, the happier they are. Moreover, most of them can recite an endless number of anecdotes about new editions that are worse than the old, and musicologists who cannot interpret properly the notation of transposing instruments, and pages strewn with extraneous symbols, and so on. I have seen critical editions embraced by conductors with a rigor contrary to their true meaning, and ignored by nervous singers unwilling to change a note or a word of an interpretation that they believe to be authorized by some mystical tradition, and denounced by pecuniary administrators as the brainchild of rapacious music publishers.

Critical editions of nineteenth-century Italian operas make available the best texts that modern scholarship, musicianship, and editorial technique can produce. Fully cognizant of modern textual theory, they do not return blindly to a single "original" source, although the composer's autograph manuscript is often our best single guide. Instead they reconstruct the circumstances under which a work was written, the interaction of composer and librettist, the effect of imposed censorship, the elements that entered into the performance, the steps that led to publication, and the role the composer played in the subsequent history of the work. They interpret the notation, often incomplete or contradictory, so that musicians have available not only a text prepared with an ear toward eventual performance, but also one that permits them to distinguish signs that stem directly from the composer from signs that derive from secondary sources or are provided by the editor. For works that exist in multiple versions, they choose a basic performing text (not always a simple matter), with appendices that make possible the practical realization of any version prepared under the direction of the composer.

Musical editions exist on the page, not in the theater; but all theatrical presentations begin with a printed score and parts. Critical editions of this repertory engage with the history of each work, and struggle with contradictions and uncertainties, and seek feedback from performers, and proofread over and over in order to eliminate inadvertent error (not even the best edition can hope to be free of error). But this scholarship does not mean to be imperious. These critical editions continue to recognize the composer as the central figure in the Italian operatic landscape during the nineteenth century, and they seek where possible to reproduce his voice fully and accurately. What really matters, of course, is what happens after the curtain goes up. ■

Job's Doctors

By JEROME GROOPMAN

Saving Milly: Love, Politics, and Parkinson's Disease by Morton Kondracke

(PublicAffairs, 275 pp., $25)

NARRATIVES OF ILLNESS have deep roots in our culture. For millennia, interpretations of disease—the reasons for the malady and the source of its solution—were grounded in the Bible. Miriam, in the Book of Numbers, develops leprosy after voicing resentment and disseminating doubt about Moses's leadership. Leprosy, a disease of relentless physical decomposition, is measured recompense for a sin that dismembers the cohesion of the community. The Book of Leviticus describes in detail how to diagnose leprosy: the priests, as agents of God, search for signs of the disease not only on the victim's body but also in his possessions and his dwellings. Treatment involves separating the afflicted from the healthy and performing a series of elaborate cleansing rituals. In Miriam's case, and presumably in the cases of others, health is restored by confession of the sin followed by a heartfelt appeal to God for healing. The Gospels recount Jesus's miraculous restoration of the lame and the blind. And the story of Lazarus goes one step further: here divine intervention is shown to be capable of transcending the biological limit of life.

These parables, which many of us learned as children, conceptualize disease as punishment for sin, whose consequences include not only physical suffering but also the psychological pain that comes with banishment from the world of the healthy. The return to health pivots on God's benevolence. But this conceptual framework is set aside in the case of Job. Here the punitive theory of bodily pain is useless, since debilitating illnesses occur in the absence of apparent transgression. Job's maladies are part of a test devised by God to counter a challenge by Satan. Job's friends, limited by man's ignorance of divine plans, can offer no tenable explanation or significant solace. God does not extend His hand to draw Job back to physical and emotional health.

It is no surprise that the Book of Job is not regular fare in Sunday schools. Job's pleas for an explanation of his suffering are met by the divine voice in a whirlwind that asserts only that no answers are forthcoming, and that questioning is to cease. But the questioning did not cease. In the modern Western canon, in works such as *The Death of Ivan Ilych* and *The Magic Mountain*, Job's queries to God take the form of self-examination. Illness is shown to cut away the façade of our daily lives and to expose our very souls. The questions become not only "why" but "what": what substance remains in us that can withstand the shattering force of

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severe disease and the prospect of death? We are forced to turn inward, away from the body, in our search for the meaning of the body's grim destiny.

In recent years there has been a flood of illness narratives, many with a distinctively formulaic cast: an elaborate repetition of the particulars of the person's life, followed by "existential" ponderings that culminate in clichés or homilies. Morton Kondracke's deeply affecting book is a sharp departure from this contemporary current. It is the story of his wife, Milly, and her suffering from Parkinson's disease, and of his life with her before and during her affliction. The book is authentic, poignant, and disturbing. It makes no pretense at cosmic wisdom. Instead it disarms and enlightens the reader with a candor so complete as to seem almost naïve. Kondracke seems to be a natural truth-teller, and the directness of his narrative, its demotic lack of interest in irony when confronted with the rudimentary facts of mortal illness, opens his reader's heart and engages his reader's mind.

Fourteen years ago, while writing a check to accompany her daughter's college application, Millicent Martinez Kondracke noticed that she could not form the letter K correctly. "She got a piece of paper and wrote her signature four or five times," Kondracke recounts, "then more times, and said her handwriting just wasn't right. I saw no difference. Anyway, I thought Milly was both vain and perfectionist about her clear penmanship. Whatever was wrong—if anything was wrong—was in her imagination or was being exaggerated, I figured." Kondracke's retelling of this pivotal moment in the life of his wife and his family is emblematic of the understated tone and unalloyed honesty that permeates the book.

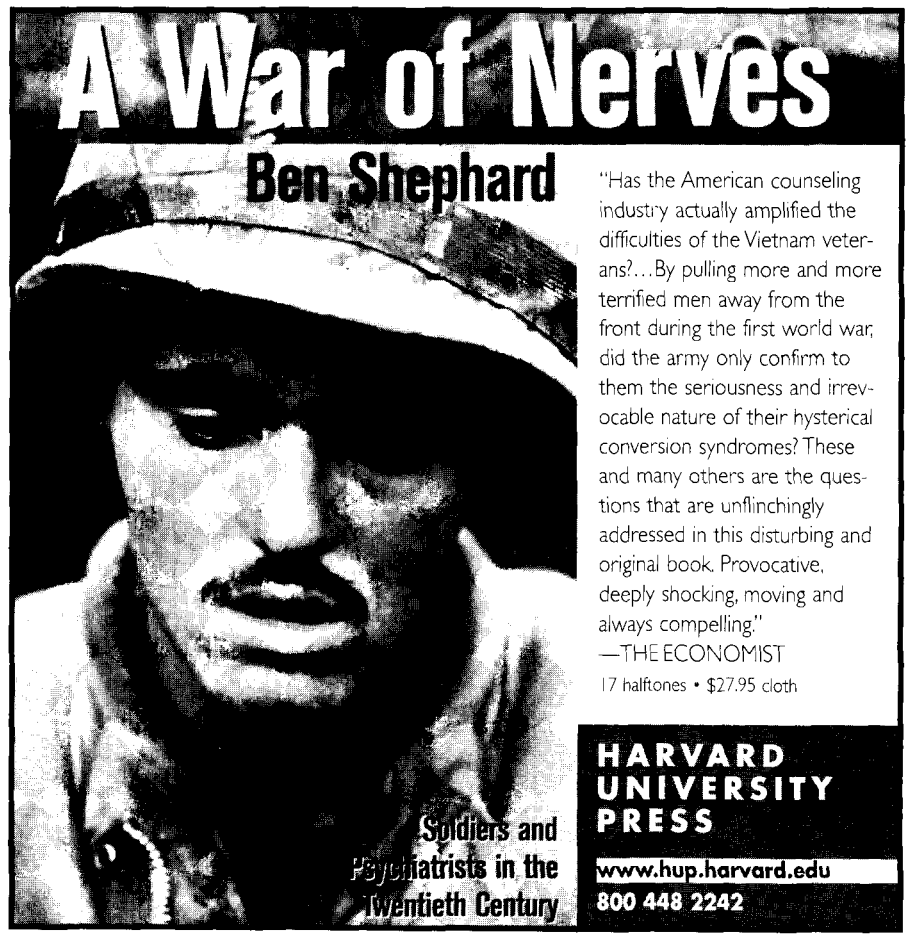
Millicent Martinez is hardly a hypochondriac or a hysteric. The daughter of a fugitive radical unionist Mexican-American father and a dysfunctional Jewish mother, Milly was without parents from an early age. She largely made her own way out of a Chicago barrio, with an iron will and a clear vision of life's threats. Moreover, she is no stranger to illness. Indeed, she is a close observer: at the ominous time of the misshapen K, Milly was a private psychosocial counselor, and had trained in the neurology ward of the National Institutes of Health.

Kondracke admits that in his youth Milly Martinez was not the wife he was looking for. A Midwesterner educated at Dartmouth, Kondracke's intention was to climb to the top of the social ladder. The most ready route to power and money was to land an Ivy League spouse with the wealth and the pedigree to compensate for his own undistinguished origins. Such a mate, Kondracke confesses, would have acted as a catapult to launch the stellar journalistic career to which he aspired. But he could not resist the love that he felt for Milly, this lovely, indigent Mexican-Jewish woman with no special prospects, and he married her. Yet this unexpected love—it is a measure of Kondracke's decency that these confessions do not seem at all vulgar—did not fill the void within him. And so for decades Kondracke applied alcohol as the numbing balm for his pained longings for fame, wealth, and clout. Finally, in the year before Milly's first sign of illness, he dried out and swore off drink. Still, his sobriety apparently did not extend to a clear vision of his wife, or of himself. It would take a devastating disease for that.

Shaky handwriting is often the first indication of Parkinson's disease. The disorder is marked by the irreversible death of neurons in the brain that produce the chemical dopamine and control critical motor functions. The pace and the severity of the disease can vary widely from person to person; some individuals live for decades with only minor difficulties, such as a fine tremor, while others are rapidly incapacitated, imprisoned in a body whose muscles are locked and unyielding. The primary treatments for Parkinson's disease are Symmetrel, which may help reduce symptoms, and Sinemet or L-dopa, which works to boost the levels of the much-needed dopamine in the brain and to restore smooth and coordinated motor function. But as more and more neurons inexplicably die, the drugs lose their beneficial effects, and the patient faces experimental treatments fraught with risk.

The diagnosis of Parkinson's disease carried a special terror for Milly. She had worked at the Neurology Center in Bethesda, Maryland, counseling patients with multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease), and she had seen the devastating manifestations of neurological degeneration. Milly also observed how these debilitated patients were abandoned by family and avoided by friends—their conditions so disturbing and so burdensome to the healthy that they were segregated from society, the equivalent of the biblical lepers.

Patients such as Milly who are seized by fear can prompt well-meaning physicians to make grave medical missteps in the misguided desire to allay the anxiety. When Milly sees the doctor who had been her director at the Neurology Center in


A War of Nerves
Ben Shephard
Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century
"Has the American counseling industry actually amplified the difficulties of the Vietnam veterans?...By pulling more and more terrified men away from the front during the first world war, did the army only confirm to them the seriousness and irrevocable nature of their hysterical conversion syndromes? These and many others are the questions that are unflinchingly addressed in this disturbing and original book. Provocative, deeply shocking, moving and always compelling."
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Bethesda for a consultation on her tremulous writing, he tells her that her unsteady hand and her lack of coordination are owed to an inflamed nerve at her elbow. But he prescribes Symmetrel, a cardinal treatment for Parkinson's disease. "Milly took [the drug] believing it meant to help her nerve problem," Kondracke writes. "He did not tell her what it was actually for, evidently not wanting to scare her."

Extending the "bliss" of ignorance is a traditional method for doctors to patronize patients. But in the end it boomerangs, and only increases the patient's burden. Not only does the truth become inescapably apparent, but the serious breach of trust casts doubt and distrust over all the doctor's future pronouncements. And this is how Milly's grim story plays out. Four months after its prescription, she musters the courage to look up information on the drug. She telephones her husband in an incoherent panic. He rushes home, not knowing what calamity has occurred.

The calamity turns out to be the truth. "I know what Parkinson's is," Milly says to Kondracke. "I've seen people with it.... It's a horrible disease. People shake. They cannot walk. They choke on their food. It can't be that!" With an eerie foreboding, Milly describes to her husband an exact picture of her future. The one detail she does not envision is her progressive difficulty in communication. One day she will become nearly mute. The specter is so awful that Milly shifts into deep denial: "Even though Milly rejected ... [the] diagnosis, she was haunted by it. She took it as a curse. She could talk about little else. She told me she was convinced she would be abandoned—as she was by her mother, and as her father was by many of his labor union friends when he was disabled and being pursued by the government.... [S]he was sure that I would find her 'disgusting' and leave her. She said she had known several patients at the Neurology Center whose husbands promised to stand by them when they got sick but ultimately didn't."

MILLY REGARDS THE diagnosis as a punishment from God, but the punitive analysis finally fails for her: as with Job, there is no apparent sin great enough to justify this terrible torment. For this reason, she finds it hard to pray to God for healing. Kondracke, raised in a diluted form of Protestantism, becomes more and more religious, or at least sufficiently devout to petition the Almighty to save Milly. Still, he is enough of a realist to know that he must not await a miracle, that he must search in this world for help and not rely on help from above.

The Kondrackes embark on a journey familiar to many with severe illnesses whose origins are obscure and whose therapies are unsatisfactory. They continue to grasp at the straw of misdiagnosis. An elderly neurologist at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota tells Milly that she does not have Parkinson's disease, but rather "essential tremor," an inconsequential shaking of her hands of unknown cause. He goes on: "Lots of people have it. It's benign. It won't get any worse. The nice thing is, you can help control it with a glass of wine at dinner."

This reprieve is illusory, and it is not long before Milly loses strength in her right hand. She soon cannot hold a pencil firmly or manipulate tweezers. The Mayo misdiagnosis, like the misrepresentation at the Neurology Center, only works to amplify her anguish, and she is soon repairing regularly to a cocktail of Valium, Prozac, and Xanax. A return visit to the Mayo Clinic with a more competent neurologist ends with a therapeutic trial of Sinemet, the mainstay of Parkinson's therapy. But the Kondrackes recognize that Sinemet is just a palliative therapy: it lessens the symptoms but does nothing to stop the degeneration of the vital nerve centers in the brain.

Then Milly turns to the National Institutes of Health. Her attending neurologist now suspects that she does not have a classic case of Parkinson's, since her symptoms of muscle stiffness and uncontrolled shaking have not responded well to the drug. He suggests that they conduct a therapeutic trial, gradually taking her off the medication and then gauging her response to precisely measured intravenous doses. Perhaps, the doctor advises, this would help to determine her ideal dosage. "This procedure proved to be a descent into hell," Kondracke recalls. "After a few days without medicine, Milly was totally unable to move, speak, or swallow. She had to be fed intravenously. I watched my wife turn almost into a living corpse, able only to move her eyes, which had a look of terror in them. She could understand what I said when I talked to her, but she could not respond or even squeeze my hand as I held hers."

Kondracke could not bear to watch what he saw:

> I appealed to [Dr.] Verhagen to begin giving her Sinemet again, and he agreed that it was time. Over the course of a week she gradually ascended out of hell, but she never regained as much body control as she has had before the experiment. Verhagen said the test—less than twelve days in all—confirmed that her "parkinsonism" consisted of more than simple loss of dopamine. This is not unheard of. About one third of Parkinson's victims have something vaguely known as "Parkinson's-plus." Milly evidently has it, but no one knows exactly what it is, what causes it, or how to treat it.... Dr. DeLong [another neurologist] later told me that he thought her case sui generis—"Milly syndrome," he called it.

Faced with a degenerative disease that traditional medicine is hard put to define or to ameliorate, it is no wonder that the desperate Kondrackes seek alternative healers. They travel to Chinatown and are instructed in preparing a complex brew of what Kondracke describes as tree bark and twigs, a foul concoction that Milly dutifully imbibes. After many weeks, they accept it as worthless. Desperation deepens, and it drives Milly to undergo two risky and complex operations on her brain. Neurosurgeons make precise cuts along neural tracts deep in her cerebrum, trying to release the tight clamp imposed on her muscles. Briefly, her movement and her speech improve. But the benefits prove transient. It soon becomes excruciatingly clear that the pace of Milly's disease is faster than the pace of medical research.

WITHOUT AVAILABLE treatments to pursue, Kondracke puts his energy into his role as his wife's caregiver. His unvarnished, highly detailed account of the burdens of loving care is unforgettable:

> At night and part-time on weekends, I am Milly's caregiver. Even with love in my heart, it is hard work.... When it's time for bed, we go back to the bathroom, where I undress Milly, put on her nightgown and new underwear, and brush her teeth. Then I roll her to the bed, open the covers, lift her, sit her down, and help her swing her legs into bed.... I'm usually dead tired by eleven-thirty or midnight, so after kissing her and telling her that I love her, I fall off to sleep quickly, holding her hand or touching her arm. She often falls asleep later, so sometimes I wake up at 5:00 A.M. and find the TV still on. I turn it off and go back to sleep. In the morning, after our kiss, I click on *Good Morning America* or *Today*. Before I get ready for work I give her the easy-to-take medicine, Sinemet and Mirapex, then take her to the bathroom once again and, if necessary, change her disposable pad on her side of the bed and give her another nightgown change.

These noble and necessary activities are not presented by Kondracke as acts of pure virtue. "Some people tell me 'You are a saint.' I admit that for years—and still sometimes—I used to exult in that. I

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feigned modesty, but I was not modest. I wanted to be Saint Mort, and I wanted to be known as Saint Mort.... When I wheeled Milly into a room and treated her in a loving way that is normal for us, I couldn't do it without also thinking about how admirable people would think I was." But Kondracke is alive to the perils of spiritual vanity. "I was using Milly, in effect, to secure respect from people that I feared I couldn't achieve otherwise. I do not know why I stopped doing this. In truth, I haven't entirely stopped. But one day it dawned on me, that life is not for show, but for real."

Ironically, it is "for show" that ultimately provides Kondracke with the national stage that he long craved. He emerges as a high-profile Beltway pundit, first on *The McLaughlin Group* and now on Fox Television. These programs are political bread and circuses—verbal food fights brought into millions of American living rooms. But now he understands what he wants from his notoriety. He knows how the levers of power are pulled, and they are within his grasp—and so he throws himself headlong into lobbying on behalf of people with Parkinson's, even though his efforts are unlikely to bear fruit in time to rescue his wife.

Initially, Kondracke's goal is to win on the congressional playing field: to secure funds earmarked for Milly's disease. Since the federal research pie is finite, this is most easily done by cutting out the biggest slice for your malady and blocking appropriations to other disease advocates. Kondracke has a particular animus toward the well-organized AIDS activists. He baldly asserts that he viewed the money for people with AIDS as misspent, since AIDS (unlike Parkinson's) is a disease that the sick largely brought on themselves through sex or drug abuse. In an electric encounter with Gary Rose, a gay AIDS advocate, filmed as part of a PBS television documentary, Rose spits back at Kondracke's calumny. Rose asserts that it is his mission to fight for himself and his gay loved ones, in the same way that it is Kondracke's to fend for those close to him. Disease politics are more than local; they are familial. Whether or not Kondracke complicates his understanding of AIDS and its victims, he does decide to change his strategy, realizing that trying to rob Peter to pay Paul is a bad idea. He now seeks to expand medical funding across the board, and to be sure that Parkinson's has its place.

Parkinson's was for years largely peripheral on the national research radar. It only attracted attention when a celebrity fell ill, because an admired and familiar face could be attached to the malady. In this case, the face belonged to Michael J. Fox. Yet even in this opportunity to push Congress and the public for much-needed support, Kondracke discovers the dark lining in the silver cloud. He reports, with palpable sadness, how Parkinson's foundations and disease advocacy groups compete against each other and snipe at each other. In his view, they have failed to capitalize on Fox's advocacy in a coordinated fashion. Ego and pettiness get in the way of a united front.

What distinguishes this book from so many other narratives of illness is the power of its voice—simple, direct, unvarnished. Kondracke's confessions are never maudlin. Milly and Mort are neither suffering saints nor heralded heroes. They are people who ardently love each other. And their love, we learn at the close of the story, demands a terrible form of responsibility. Kondracke promises Milly a death with dignity, meaning a death that is chosen by Milly, at a time and a place, and with his direct intervention, to minimize her suffering and to expedite her passing. The stories in the Bible do not end this way. Assisted suicide is a step that Kondracke believes he will be capable of taking. It comes perilously close to a God-like hubris; but it remains his only way to save Milly, and this good, wounded man now lives to save her. ■

McCullough, Adams, and the decline of popular history.

America Made Easy

By Sean Wilentz

I.

At the height of the XYZ Affair in 1798, when American public outrage against France verged on war hysteria, President John Adams briefly enjoyed the sort of popular acclaim that he had long thought he deserved. In Paris, the French foreign minister Talleyrand had tried to bribe three American envoys sent by Adams to negotiate an end to continuing maritime hostilities between the two erstwhile allies. Adams, who had never served in battle, took to wearing military regalia in public and spent hours writing grateful, bellicose replies to his backers' addresses of support, vowing never to countenance "national Dishonour" and bidding his admirers to assume a "warlike Character." It all got a little heady. "No man...," the Federalist Theodore Sedgwick declared at the height of the enthusiasm, "will go down to posterity with greater lustre than John Adams—I will not even except *George Washington*."

A mere two years later Adams, forsaken by the right wing of his own party and about to lose the presidency to his Democratic-Republican rival Thomas Jefferson, saw his popularity plummet.

John Adams
by David McCullough
(Simon & Schuster, 751 pp., $35)

And yet, as David McCullough observes in his new biography of Adams, the old revolutionary still had his admirers, who saw him as the political legatee of the now deceased Washington. "John Adams, it was said, was 'a good husband, a good father, a good citizen, and a good man,'" McCullough writes. His footnotes are silent about who said this about Adams; but it might as well have been McCullough himself.

McCullough believes that, despite a strong irascible streak, Adams was a good man, a better man than history has recorded, a much better man than his vanquisher and sometime friend Jefferson. The essential goodness of John Adams—his plainspokenness, his political courage, his statesmanly virtue, his connubial ardor—is the central theme of this long book. McCullough, it seems, can have no higher praise for any American president than that he was good; and Adams earns the accolade, in page after page of detailed anecdote.

The result is not an all-out defense of Adams, like the one that was mounted by Page Smith in his even longer life of Adams more than a generation ago. McCullough is a sounder historian than

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Smith. Yet McCullough's book, precisely for that reason, seems all the more strange. It is a prudent but deeply admiring study of an enormously talented and remarkable patriot who was also one of the most suspicious, pugnacious, and at times pig-headed conservatives of the early American republic. In conveying so much about Adams's goodness, in vivid and smooth prose, McCullough slights Adams's intellectual ambitions, his brilliance and his ponderousness, his pettiness and his sometimes disabling pessimism. McCullough scants, in other words, everything that went into rendering Adams the paradox that he was: a great American who would prove virtually irrelevant to his nation's subsequent political development. And in its very smoothness and vividness, McCullough's life of Adams is useful also in another way. It gives a measure of the current condition of popular history in America, in its strengths but also—rather grievously—in its weaknesses.

II.

In 1948, the young historian Richard Hofstadter noted that the American state of mind had become "increasingly passive and spectatorial." Hofstadter identified "a ravenous appetite for Americana," and he observed that this popular historical mentality had led, over the previous fifteen years, to the writing of countless works—historical novels, fictionalized biographies, collections of pictures and cartoons, books on American regions and rivers—conceived, he said, "in a spirit of sentimental appreciation rather than of critical analysis."

Hofstadter had a special animus toward a particular form of New Deal-era nostalgic kitsch, one part Carl Sandburg, one part WPA, one part folksy-wolksy Popular Front. But he took umbrage at all historical writing that looked backward to a vision of American history as simply a rewarding spectacle, "a succession of well-fulfilled promises." The main function of such writing, he contended, was to fend off the intense insecurities of the day. As forms of reassurance, Hofstadter contended, these histories "induce[d] a desire to observe and enjoy, not to analyze and act."

We are living now in a new golden age of historical popularization; and much of today's popular presentation of history may be understood as a reaction against the new departure, the new stringency, that Hofstadter and his generation undertook. From the 1950s through the 1980s, American historians devoted themselves to a remorseless re-examination of the nation's past. Not surprisingly, given the rise of the civil rights movement, a large part of the re-evaluation concerned the half-hidden history of slavery and race relations, and it quickly embraced also the history of labor, women, politics, and ideas. Also not surprisingly, this historiography of national self-reckoning stirred up intense—at times even ugly—debates among proponents of the clashing methods and interpretations, left, right, and center.

No single label can be imposed on the ideas and the techniques of, among many others, C. Vann Woodward, David Potter, Gerda Lerner, Bernard Bailyn, Eugene Genovese, Forrest McDonald, and Herbert Gutman, let alone the numerous clashing versions of so-called "New Left" history written by younger historians. This was not exactly a school. Just looking at the list brings to mind intellectual disputations that from time to time defeated the ideal of scholarly comity. Still, all these historians had in common a dedication to treating history not as a panoramic backward gaze, but as a battleground of contesting views about American life and development. Woodward once called the new historical dispensation "the age of interpretation." Critical analysis was in the saddle. American history was meant to rattle its readers, not to confirm them in their received myths and platitudes about America.

For many reasons, the age of interpretation faded away over the past decade or so. What were once upstart revisionist currents calcified into self-regarding academic sub-specialties, sponsoring plenty of analysis but little fundamental debate. The flatness of post-Watergate American politics sapped some of the excitement out of critical history, and what was left got channeled into a culture war that turned history into fodder for political polemics. With a few notable exceptions, such as the Civil War scholar James M. McPherson, academic historians lost contact with the large American reading public that earlier professional historians, from Charles and Mary Beard to Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., Richard Hofstadter, and C. Vann Woodward, had enjoyed. Complaints arose about the dullness, the narrowness, and the atrocious writing that afflicted the analytical history that was practiced in the universities; and the complaints duly became clichés. And into the breach, to the academics' chagrin, stepped a new breed of popular historians, led by David McCullough and an assortment of journalists, novelists, and PBS film-makers, plus the odd crossover professor.

Or so it appeared. In fact, popular American history writing has been around all along. And the struggle over who should tell the nation's history, the professors or the popularizers, is an old one, dating back at least to the 1930s and 1940s—precisely the period that Hofstadter found so glutted with vapid Americana. It was then that, paradoxically, the Columbia University historian Allan Nevins led the first significant formal efforts to de-academicize American historical writing. It was then, too, that popularization first met with sharp resistance—some of the sharpest of which came not from the academics but from an excellent, truculent, idiosyncratic, and now nearly forgotten popular historian of the American West named Bernard DeVoto.

Long before he became a professor, Allan Nevins was a highly successful journalist, mainly as an editorial writer for the New York *Evening Post*, *The Nation*, and the New York *World*. Only in 1928, when he was thirty-eight, was Nevins persuaded to join the history faculty at Columbia. There he became a dedicated teacher, overseeing for twenty years the department's master's degree program. (Hofstadter, quite tellingly, chose to pursue his Columbia M.A. under Harry Carman, a more politically charged liberal historian.) Nevins won Pulitzer Prizes for biographies (now rarely read) of Grover Cleveland and Hamilton Fish. In 1947, he published the first volume of his monumental history of the Civil War era—an epic that would win Nevins permanent respect as an academic scholar and as a popular writer, even though its interpretive perspective shifted over the years in which it was written.

Nevins prospered in the academy, but he never felt completely at home in his monograph-driven profession. "He was concerned," as one of his students recalled, "not only to guide the young historian toward an understanding of historical method but also to make him aware of the opportunities which history, as a form of literature, offered to the writer, the editor, the critic." Frustrated by what he regarded as the academy's squelching of literary ambition, Nevins became the driving force behind the formation, in 1939, of the Society of American Historians, an elected group of freelance historians and biographers, as well as some belletristic academics, in order "to promote literary distinction in historical writing." Nevins also called for the publication of a lively and well-written magazine of American history, purged of scholarly awkwardness and aimed at a popular audience—a project that finally got off the ground in 1954, when a group of former *Life* magazine editors started *American Heritage*.

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Nevins's extra-academic activities helped to make him the most conspicuous American historian of his day. But they did not impress every non-academic historian, least of all the caustic Bernard DeVoto. Like Nevins, who grew up in Illinois, DeVoto was raised in the hinterland, in Ogden, Utah. Like Nevins, he had little patience for academic snobbery and pretension. But unlike the journalist Nevins, DeVoto, who came east to get his B.A. at Harvard, began his writing career as a novelist, a book reviewer, and a literary critic. (His first major work, *Mark Twain's America*, appeared in 1932, and was a devastating, even cruel pro-Western rebuttal to Van Wyck Brooks's genteel debunking study *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*, which had been published a dozen years earlier.) And unlike Nevins, DeVoto's academic career ended abruptly in 1936, when Harvard (where he had been teaching as a part-time lecturer in English) declined to give him a permanent position. After this embittering episode DeVoto entered journalism full-time, as editor of the *Saturday Review* from 1936 to 1938, and as the monthly "Easy Chair" columnist for *Harper's*, a job that he held from 1935 until 1956. And while churning out his journalism, DeVoto abandoned novels in favor of history, above all his masterful trilogy on the American West, *The Year of Decision: 1846*, *Across the Wide Missouri*, and *The Course of Empire*.

As emphatically as Nevins, DeVoto criticized university historians, most of whom, he believed, were timid, pinched souls who wrote poorly. DeVoto detested scholarly orthodoxies even more than Nevins did, not least the dogmas of the pro-Southern and so-called "revisionist" school, which held that the Civil War was a needless struggle brought on by maniacal abolitionists and blundering politicians. The revisionists dominated academic and popular historical writing in America from the 1930s through the early 1950s, strongly influencing the opening volumes of Allan Nevins's magnum opus. DeVoto, an unforgiving anti-slavery Yankee, would have none of it. "Against this, my boy, the watchman waketh in vain," DeVoto wrote with fury to an editor friend who had gone soft on the revisionists.

BUT DEVOTO THE journalist also believed that Nevins the professor had gone too far in his anti-academicism. Although few professional historians were gifted writers, he observed, their books had other virtues, chiefly their love of historical facts. Literary types, he believed, too rarely shared that love, leading them to simplify, to sensationalize, and to gossip about the past. The real trouble with history, DeVoto asserted, was that the professionals had abandoned both historical synthesis and the advancing of strong, even heretical personal judgments. Instead they clouded their narrow findings in pusillanimous jargon while kowtowing to one or another general line of interpretation. An injection of liveliness by journalist semi-pro historians, in magazine venues such as the one that Nevins proposed, would not solve this problem, or even address it; and it might make matters worse. If only professional historians were more courageous, DeVoto wrote acidly, then there would be "no move to supplement the *American Historical Review* with a periodical modeled on the *National Geographic Magazine*."

DeVoto the erstwhile novelist held equally strong views about the uses of literary style in history. "My books employ the methods and techniques of literature," he boasted to a librarian friend in Ogden, "and especially they have structure as literature. They have form. What's more to the point, and what distinguishes them sharply from a book by Allan Nevins or [the prominent revisionist historian] J.G. Randall, say, is that the form is used to reveal meaning. The meaning is the end in view." In particular, DeVoto's history writing, beginning with *The Year of Destiny*, artfully deployed synecdoche, the use of a single figure or episode to stand for a larger whole, as well as what he called "simultaneousness," the braiding together of several narrative strands in order to convey the fact that they were all happening at once.

DeVoto could find meaning where others could not, in a certain cracked Romantic vein that he thought essential to American history, none stronger than the combination of insecurity, utopianism, and cold logic that became the willful idea of Manifest Destiny. "Ours is a story mad with the impossible," he wrote to his old friend and sometime literary advisee the eminent popular historian Catherine Drinker Bowen, "it is by chaos out of dream, it began as dream and it has continued as dream down to the last headline you read in a newspaper, and of our dreams there are two things above all others to be said, that only madmen could have dreamed them or would have dared to—and that we have shown a considerable faculty for making them come true." Limning this lunacy and its fruits—without sensationalizing it—in the saga of the Mormons, or of the doomed Donner Party, or of the Oregon land fever, became DeVoto's peculiar achievement.

III.

ALTHOUGH DISMISSED BY most academic historians, DeVoto's opinionated, self-consciously literary style of history hardly went unappreciated. *Across the Wide Missouri* won the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1948; and there were in those days, as there have been ever since, a few American non-academic historians and biographers who upheld DeVoto's analytical and literary standards, including Catherine Drinker Bowen, Fawn Brodie, and Shelby Foote. But DeVoto's style of seriousness has been eclipsed by the more journalistic and sentimentally descriptive style of *American Heritage*, whose influence is everywhere.

In the magazine's founding issue, its editor, Bruce Catton, declared that "our beat is anything that ever happened in America." And so it remains, producing every month a quirky grab bag of fascinating but undemanding features on everything from (as in one recent issue) the history of the voting machine, Americans' centuries-old love affair with Venice, and the rise and fall of the Oldsmobile. The *American Heritage* style came to dominate the writing of non-academic American history books, not least in Catton's enormously popular multi-volume military history of the Civil War.

David McCullough is the most accomplished current practitioner of this style, and one of the major forces behind its resurgence. After graduating Yale in 1955, McCullough found work as a writer and editor at *Time*, then spent three years at the United States Information Agency, and wound up at the American Heritage Publishing Company during the second half of the 1960s. (A freelance writer since 1970, he has remained connected to *American Heritage* as senior contributing editor.) His first book, *The Johnstown Flood*, which appeared in 1968, was fully in the magazine's high-Americana mode, a closely researched story of disaster and human courage in a nineteenth-century town in McCullough's native Pennsylvania. From there he advanced to bigger and better stories of daring engineering feats (and disaster and human courage): the building of the Brooklyn Bridge (in *The Great Bridge*) and of the Panama Canal (in *The Path Between the Seas*).

Those remain McCullough's best books so far. They displayed a thorough mastery of technological detail, as well as of the complex social and political background, that rose well above the standard level of descriptive journalistic history. That they neither offered nor challenged any big ideas about American history was of little consequence: in these instances

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McCullough's talents as a researcher and a narrator more than matched the unquestionable importance and interest of his topics. Yet his study of the Panama Canal did not lead him straight ahead, say, to a study of the Hoover Dam or the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Manhattan Project or the Apollo Project, big subjects all. It led him sideways, to write a lucid and admiring study of the early life of our canal-building president Theodore Roosevelt. Since then he has produced even grander and more admiring presidential biographies, first *Truman* and now *John Adams*.

IN ATTAINING LITERARY celebrity, McCullough has himself become an admirable public figure. His hard work a few years ago on behalf of a group that he co-chaired, Protect Historic America, helped mightily in defeating the Disney Corporation's outrageous plans to build a theme park alongside the Manassas Battlefield in Virginia. During his stint as president of Nevins's old association, the Society of American Historians (of which, I fully disclose, I am a member and a nominal officer), McCullough did an excellent job of raising the group's profile and encouraging closer contact between academic and non-academic historians.

Above all, McCullough is familiar to millions as the avuncular host of the Public Broadcasting Service's "American Experience" series, and as the chief narrator of Ken Burns's documentary *The Civil War*. Thanks to public television, McCullough has become the handsome, authoritative face of American history—and, with his pleasantly weathered baritone, also the voice of American history, a position previously held by such scholarly luminaries as Raymond Massey and Hal Holbrook. The trouble with all this is not that it has turned McCullough into a television star, but that it has accompanied—no, it has required—his move into historical realms that are unsuited to his strengths as a writer. And in making this move, McCullough has contributed significantly to the latest revival, under the banner of "narrative," of popular history as passive nostalgic spectacle.

He is not, to be sure, the only culprit, nor is he the worst. Ken Burns and PBS offered, in *The Civil War*, a televised version of the *American Heritage* technique, brilliant in its detail, evocative in its storytelling, but crushingly sentimental and vacuous in its historical judgments of the war's origins and meaning. (The monotonous weepy fiddle-playing, now a standard feature of Burns productions, did not help matters.) PBS also shares in the responsibility for the even more egregious advent of the "presidential historian," a hitherto unknown scholarly species whose chief function is to offer television viewers anodyne tidbits of historical trivia that seem pertinent to current political events, and to look and sound remarkable when doing so (though none of them can possibly look and sound as remarkable as David McCullough).

Outside of television, a renewed rage for historical fiction has produced what amounts to a fresh round of costume-drama Americana—books long on knowingness and minutiae and postmodern sampling, but only rarely containing (as in the late Michael Shaara's fine novel about Gettysburg, *The Killer Angels*) any historical ideas of note. The demand for blockbuster non-fiction historical epics has defeated the best efforts of serious, iconoclastic journalists-turned-historians such as David Halberstam (*The Fifties*) and the late J. Anthony Lukas (*Big Trouble*). Nor has the American academic elite been immune: consider Simon Schama's erudite and jolly and empty traversals through everything from a nineteenth-century murder mystery in Boston to the history of Britain since 3500 B.C., which turn all historical subjects into historical romps. It is hard to think of a sadder scholarly defection to the universe of entertainment.

McCullough's specific contribution has been to treat large-scale historical biography as yet another genre of spectatorial appreciation, an exercise in character recognition, a reliable source of edification and pleasant uplift. In his life of Truman, McCullough dutifully describes the peppery personality and the political travails of the Man from Missouri—but what really captivates McCullough is Truman's character, the thoughtfulness and the kindness that lurked behind the toughness and the complexity of what came across as Truman's common sense. McCullough writes eulogistically that "he *was* America," whatever that means. (It is exactly the sort of synecdoche that would have caused Bernard DeVoto to arch an eyebrow.) And McCullough concludes his thousand-page tome with a tribute to President Truman from yet another American original, the late journalist Eric Sevareid: "Remembering him reminds people what a man in that office ought to be like. It's character, just character. He stands like a rock in memory now."

Truman, which was aptly castigated by Ronald Steel in these pages as a "valentine," can be defended on the grounds that it contained a good deal of fresh material when it appeared. And it is plausible—indeed, it is likely—that Harry Truman's character really was his greatest asset. Still, that notion ought to be a hypothesis in search of proof, not a prior excuse for the veneration of great men, or an all-purpose basis for biographical and historical judgment. Plenty of great Americans, after all, have had deeply flawed characters; and if sterling character were the main guide to greatness, all America would formally commemorate the birthday of Robert E. Lee instead of the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr.

The paucity of McCullough's picturesque characterological approach to the past is underscored by his life of John Adams. For Adams is a well-studied historical figure about whom McCullough has virtually nothing new to reveal. He is a figure whose sharp edges and mixed political record defy grateful appreciation. And he is a figure whose importance stems from his intellect and his politics, not from his character.

IV.

NO AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY leader—not Madison, not Hamilton, and certainly not Jefferson—surpassed John Adams as a prolific author of systematic political theory. He was, to be sure, also an important lawyer and diplomat and congressional delegate; and he was, of course, the second president of the United States. But of all of Adams's claims to greatness, none was more deserving than his role in crafting what he himself regarded as America's greatest gift to the world: its conceptions and institutions of constitutional government.

In his "Novanglus" essays, published in the *Massachusetts Gazette* in 1774, Adams laid out, in a painfully labored but learned prose, a Yankee version of the rising patriot claim that a conspiratorial, venal British ministry was trying to reduce Americans to abject oppression. Two years later, in his urgent pamphlet *Thoughts on Government*, Adams affirmed his republicanism but argued forcefully against the democratic radicalism proclaimed by Thomas Paine in his immensely popular *Common Sense*—an "ignorant" and "despicable" work, Adams charged, that "will do more Mischief... than all the Tory writings together." Early in 1787—before the framing of the Constitution, let alone the writing of *The Federalist*—Adams published the first volume of his *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*, an extended argument in favor of a three-tiered, carefully balanced government. Add to these efforts Adams's early anti-British *Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, and his authorship of the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, and his attack on the radicalism of the French Revolution in *Discourses on Davila*, as well as his auto-

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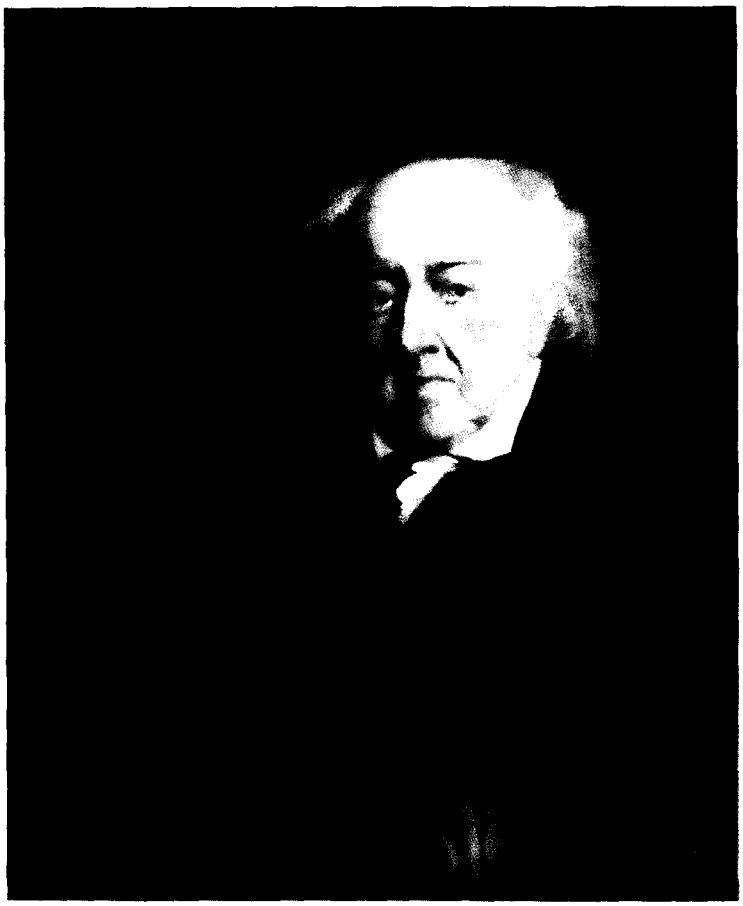
biography, his *Boston Patriot* essays-in-retirement defending his presidency, and scores of occasional political pieces, and it amounts to an impressive if often tedious body of work, seemingly unavoidable to any Adams scholar.

Apart from *Thoughts on Government* and the *Defence*, however, McCullough barely mentions Adams's political writings; and what he has to say about the two major works consists of brief quotations surrounded by utterly conventional plot summary and commentary. Adams had difficulties writing lucidly for the public (in marked contrast to his private correspondence and his extraordinary diary). Lawyerly self-consciousness choked his pen. Yet he diligently persevered, sometimes laboring under the strain of fast-moving events. To slight this side of the man, as McCullough does, is to overlook an important aspect of Adams's struggle for fame. Worse, it is to rob him of his ideas.

Nor is McCullough's judgment much better regarding those parts of Adams's public life that he does treat. In his two chapters on Adams's unfortunate presidency, McCullough barely moves beyond colorful but cursory (and generally pro-Adams) sketches of the major political events—which include some of the most significant events in the nation's early history. He notes that the Alien and Sedition Acts, which Adams endorsed, have been "rightly judged by history as the most reprehensible acts of his presidency," but he says hardly anything about what made them so reprehensible: the jailings and the peremptory trials of Adams's critics for finding the least fault in the president; the despairing departure of shiploads of French nationals (including Adams's ex-friend Moreau de St.-Méry) scared stiff by the anti-foreigner repression; the sheer hysteria that accompanied what Jefferson called a "reign of witches."

Instead McCullough tries to mitigate matters by repeating Adams's claims that these were necessary measures, in view of the continuing, undeclared quasi-war with France. Later, uncritically serving up the pro-Adams conventional wisdom, McCullough praises Adams for achieving "a rare level of statesmanship" in finally choosing not to wage formal full-scale war in 1799. Yet McCullough seems unaware that, far from a patriotic act of self-sacrifice, Adams's decision fit squarely with what had become his best political interests as the 1800 presidential election approached, given the mounting evidence of anti-war and pro-Jefferson sentiment in crucial states. Nor does McCullough stop to wonder why, after refraining from war, Adams did not lift a finger to halt the "war measures" that he had helped to unleash against his domestic political foes. But McCullough does devote some evocative pages to describing what was then called the President's House:



Gilbert Stuart, portrait of John Adams, 1823

> The immense house was still unfinished. It reeked of wet plaster and wet paint. Fires had to be kept blazing in every fireplace on the main floor to speed up the drying process. Only a twisted back stair had been built between floors. Closet doors were missing. And though the furniture had arrived from Philadelphia, it looked lost in such enormous rooms.

This is vintage McCullough, the teller of tales. But when he gets to Adams's enormous intellect, McCullough looks lost.

Absent a thorough or even a reliable evaluation of Adams's ideas and politics, it is impossible to comprehend what made the man tick. But McCullough, drawing on immense reserves of as yet unpublished Adams letters as well as on Adams's famous diary, does show that he and his wife, Abigail, lustily adored each other; that Adams was all too gloomily aware of his strong streak of vanity; and that Adams was a blunt, candid man who, though unloved by the masses, could be charming and witty and immensely approachable in private. Narrative, narrative, narrative.

None of this will surprise anyone even casually acquainted with the large scholarly and popular literature on Adams and his family. Moreover, quoting unpublished letters does not necessarily enrich our understanding of a major historical figure; as in Adams's case, it may chiefly re-affirm what is already known, which could be one reason why nobody has bothered to publish those letters. Nor do McCullough's fresh and expanded descriptions of certain episodes that Adams long remembered—for example, his death-defying ocean voyage to France in 1778—add much of weight to the historical record.

There is one thing that McCullough's obsession with Adams's character does add to our understanding of his subject, but it has less to do with John Adams than with Thomas Jefferson. Over the past twenty years, Jefferson's reputation has come in for a severe and wrongheaded downgrading by historians. McCullough contributes to this downgrading by repeatedly pointing out the manifest inferiority of Jefferson's character compared with Adams's. Jefferson was a Virginia aristocrat and slaveholder; Adams was the son of a plain Massachusetts farmer. Jefferson was gracious but devious and somewhat remote, a man who avoided conflict; Adams was forthright and loved to argue. Jefferson was an appetitive spendthrift; Adams was frugal. Jefferson was prone to make extravagant claims and to tell what Adams's son, John Quincy, called his "large stories"; Adams was preternaturally down-to-earth and proportionate. Jefferson believed in the improvement of mankind, but he had little interest in people in particular; Adams was skeptical about improving mankind, but he was

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fascinated by the intricacies of human nature. And what about Sally Hemings....

Between the fugacious Jefferson and the doughty Adams, McCullough is much more at ease with, and appreciative of, the latter. Indeed, in his portrait of Adams one can detect, ever so slightly, the lineaments of his modern hero, "Give 'Em Hell" Harry. But Jefferson, although never less than a great American in McCullough's world of great Americans, comes across as narcissistic, artificial, and unsteady. Those are traits that, in McCullough's mind, run against the good old American grain.

Yet much of the value of this contrast depends on the beholder. Jefferson's elusiveness and deviousness could just as easily be praised as his protean genius, an indispensable quality for one who would lead a new nation of sovereign squabbling individuals. By allowing different constituencies to see in him what they wanted to see, Jefferson mastered the democratic art of leading while appearing to be a follower, and of following while appearing to be a leader; and by practicing those arts he was able to defeat the Federalists, to complete the Louisiana Purchase, and to reform the federal government. Honest, argumentative, dogged John Adams, by contrast, was entirely unsuited for the President's House; and so he wound up being the first of only eight presidents in all of American history (one of the others being his son) to be denied re-election after four years in office.

And even if one allows for different tastes in character, McCullough's approach still falls flat as a historical method. For finally men such as Jefferson and Adams need to be judged not for who they were but for what they thought and what they did. Jefferson's failures, his compromises, and his hypocrisies will always, and quite fairly, provide grist for his critics. But his lasting importance lies in his singular effort to take some of the most unsettling ideas of the Enlightenment and put them to the test in the highest reaches of American politics. By doing so, he helped to infuse our political life with egalitarian and democratic impulses that exploded in the nineteenth century and are still very much alive.

John Adams and his legacy were very different. While Adams was a revolutionary on the subject of American independence, his more conservative appropriation of the Enlightenment—the product of his intense devotion to the study of politics—eventually cut him off from the dynamic forces in American public life. No Revolutionary leader, to be sure, saw so clearly the limits and the snares of egalitarianism as Adams did: in his guileless, skeptical way, he provided a necessary philosophical and political ballast to the democratic enthusiasms ignited by Paine, let alone by Jefferson's sometimes dreamy speculations about human improvement. Although it would be Jefferson's friend (and, in time, Adams's foe) James Madison who would translate this skeptical frame of mind into a design for American nationhood, Adams deserves credit for sustaining a realistic conception of balance, order, and the political dangers of an unchecked popular will.

Yet Adams also remained stuck in various dogmas that quickly became outmoded in the years during and after the Revolution. Above all, he never shook off the classical understanding of politics as the incorporation of distinct social interests—the many, the few, and the one; or democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy. When Adams spoke of mixed or balanced government, he had those ancient distinctions in mind, as if the chief aim of government ought to be the counterbalancing of permanent social classes. He never really understood (as Madison did) that the Revolution had overthrown this way of thinking, replacing it with an ideal of popular sovereignty that permitted no permanent social classes in politics. America, the Revolution had decreed, would have a classless state; and this dispensation would be forever incomprehensible to John Adams.

This is a poignant story. It is the tale of a courageous and good man who fell out of touch with the country that he loved and that he served so diligently and often so well. But it is a story that simply eludes the pieties of McCullough. By giving us the admirable Adams—by celebrating what he calls Adams's "bedrock integrity, his spirit of independence, his devotion to country, his marriage, his humor, and a great underlying love of life"—McCullough has written merely another valentine. But it is one thing to be swept away by a major figure of one's own lifetime, and quite another to cast as an exemplary political figure a man who died one hundred and seventy-five years ago in another political age—especially one whose connection to our own rambunctious democracy is as tenuous as Adams's.

The result is a biography that fails to ask many difficult questions about its subject, and thereby makes him less interesting than he actually was. Benjamin Franklin, who grew to loathe Adams (the feeling was mutual), remarked in 1783 that Adams "means well for his country, is always an honest man, often a wise one, but sometimes and in some things, absolutely out of his senses." McCullough regards this as a calumny, which is too bad. A finer taste for ambiguity might have helped him to grasp the accuracy of Franklin's judgment. So would a surer sense for what the idiosyncratic Bernard DeVoto recognized as the slightly mad strain in all of American history—an indispensable sense of American strangeness that seems to have disappeared among our leading popular historians, for whom madness is just a kind of charm and strangeness just a kind of color.

After departing the President's House in defeat in 1801, Adams wrote to his political ally Benjamin Stoddert to complain that his ouster proved that "we have no Americans in America." In fact, it was Adams, and not his countrymen, who by sticking to his principles effectively left America. Only deep into his retirement did Adams seem to reach a sad reckoning with what had happened. "From the year 1761, now more than Fifty years," the aging patriot told his friend Benjamin Rush in 1812, "I have constantly lived in an enemies Country." That was said in bitterness, obviously; and yet in the end there was a kernel of truth to his feeling of estrangement from his country. John Adams was certainly a great American, but it is impossible any longer to believe that he was an exemplary American. He is certainly not the hero we need now, if a hero is what we need. ■

Late Afternoon, Rome

Down the street, on the path to the oratory,
the stations of the cross—huge bronze slabs,
their ordinary agonies modernized to poses
on a fashion runway—have been wired shut.
A river of swallows sheers off course again
around airlocked spurs of warmth or chill.
The sun is out late, panning for gold
in the silt of our ochre upper floors.
Everything is looking up for a change.
Isn't that white capsule on the blue tablecloth
the daily jumbo jet? It's so far beyond
the cross and thorns, beyond the drawstring
of birds, beyond the last light down here.
And there's already a glass of water on the table,
for the pill I was meant to take hours ago.

J.D. McClatchy

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Game Over

I HAVE MORE THAN A FEW things in common with Lara Croft, the gun-toting, Bigfoot-slaying, back-flipping, treasure-hunting, aristocratic English heroine who stars in the video game Tomb Raider, recently spun off into the number-one movie in the United States, *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*. We both have dark hair and dark eyes. We both enjoy music and the arts. We both like corgis. We both write for a living. And we both have breasts. But while Lara's 34Ds unwaveringly float mid-bicep, I, like most women, rely on an armada of brassieres to ballast what nature never intended skin to buoy. The 5-foot-9-inch, 130-pound Lara—even with the enviable measurements of 34D-24-35—seems not to have any breast-control issues at all. Whether she's fighting giant lizards or rappelling in the Himalayas, they invariably stay put.

HER SECRET? LARA CROFT ISN'T REAL. She doesn't actually weigh in at 130 pounds (and her breasts don't weigh anything at all), the "stats" in her lengthy promotional "bio" notwithstanding. She's a synthespian: a computer-generated virtual woman with the pixels and the moxie to engender crushes in the hearts of the millions of gamers who made Tomb Raider one of the most successful video game series of all time. The game's tag line: "Sometimes a killer body just isn't enough."

BUT NOT BEING HUMAN HASN'T KEPT Lara from taking heat for her unnaturally perfect body. Feminists say that, with the advent of computer-generated cybermodels and synthespians, the bar for real women has been raised even higher. Asks Germaine Greer: "How many women do you know with broad chests and narrow waists like [Lara Croft]? Men should wake up to the fact that women have big bums. Whatever these characters are, they're not real women." Princeton University Professor Elaine Showalter claims that "Croft and the cybermodels epitomise the era of power grooming. No longer can women depend on a dab of powder and lipstick before they face the public." Today's woman, Showalter writes, employs "[l]iposuction, exfoliation, laser-blasting, Botox and collagen [to] take the skin to pix[e]lated smoothness and tautness." Life imitating art.

THE OUTRAGE ISN'T SURPRISING. Feminists have long decried the alchemy employed to create women of Barbie doll proportions, charging that such images cause men to objectify women, and contribute to the lack of female self-esteem that leads to depression, eating disorders, and the operating table. And with Lara and her virtual compatriots, that alchemy—and presumably the suffering it spawns—has taken a giant technological leap forward. Still, there may be an upside to all this pixelation. After all, feminists aren't the only ones infuriated by the emergence of cybermodels—the "real" modeling industry has good reason to be upset as well. Cybermodels may do more than put human models out of work; their explicit fakeness might just force people to admit that the whole modeling enterprise has been fake from the start.

FROM *TOY STORY* TO *TITANIC* TO *Shrek*, we're growing increasingly accustomed to recognizing synthespians for the man-made products they are. On the Internet, cybernewscasters Vandrea (modeled on British newscaster Andrea Catherwood) and Ananova have become celebs. And Webbie Tookay (that's "2-K"), the first virtual model, was dubbed "the most valuable model in the world" with an estimated market value last year of $15 million, thanks, in part, to contracts with Nokia and Sony. (By contrast, Gisele Bundchen, the world's highest-paid human model, earns a mere $5 million per year.) But cybermodel celebrity is a consciously cynical phenomenon. Their creators aren't trying to *trick* us into believing these images are real. They're just simulating reality.

WHAT'S MORE, EVEN AS GIRLS' MAGAzine *mary-kateandashley* dubs Lara "an Indiana Jones-esque girl" and as Angelina Jolie, the 26-year-old Academy Award-winning actress, doubles for Lara on film, it's almost impossible not to notice that Croft and her cyberpeers aren't real. It's true, as Naomi Wolf wrote in her 1991 book *The Beauty Myth*, that " 'Computer imaging'—the controversial new technology that tampers with photographic reality—has been used for years in women's magazines' beauty advertising." But the whole point of computer imaging was that magazine readers didn't know—or at least didn't think much about the fact—that the woman on the cover didn't look that way in real life. And so young girls could aspire to look the way Gisele looks on this month's cover of *Vogue*. But they can't ignore Lara's inauthenticity, because her inauthenticity is central to her fame. "When I first played the game, I thought [Lara's breast size] was ridiculous," said one 15-year-old girl I interviewed after the film. "How could she run and jump dressed like that?" And you can see it on the video screen. Lara barely speaks, is controlled by the player, and is primarily seen from behind. A clear case of art trying—and failing—to imitate life.

OF COURSE IT'S POSSIBLE THAT, AS technology improves, it will become increasingly difficult to distinguish real women from their computer-generated counterparts. And if that's the case, beauty-industry handlers will have even more reason to prefer synthetic women. "She is the perfect model," cheers Webbie Tookay's agent, John Casablancas—the founder of Elite Model Management who left his post last year to found the first-ever cybermodel agency, Illusion 2K. "Webbie can eat nothing and keep her curves.... [S]he will never get a pimple or ask for a raise." With a Screen Actors Guild strike looming, speculates a recent *Entertainment Weekly* article, the demand for synthespians may grow even higher. And, unlike most reed-thin models and actresses, cybermodels have no need for breast augmentation, airbrushing, padded bras, or industrial-strength double-stick tape.

STILL, WOULD IT BE SO BAD IF TECHnology grew sophisticated enough to trump reality, if synthespians replaced women in all those forms of entertainment feminists have historically derided—modeling, beauty pageants, pornography? Who would protest if we no longer expected women to look like models, just as we never expected anyone to climb walls like Spider-Man or have supersonic hearing like the Bionic Woman?

PERHAPS CYBERMODELS AND SYNthespians will help us admit that what men have been getting off on all these years—and what women have been emulating at unrecoupable cost—are, like Lara Croft, little more than cartoon characters. And with that admission might come a more natural definition of what's sexy, by which the genuine confluence of health and DNA is deemed preferable to the handiwork of a Photoshop virtuoso. Were that truly to come to pass, of course, it wouldn't only be the human supermodels whose careers would suffer: Presumably, Lara's would as well. But she'd manage. After all, she'll always have her writing.

AMANDA FAZZONE

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The Truth About School Vouchers - 2

Admission Practices

Milwaukee has the nation's oldest tax-supported program that lets low-income parents enroll their children in private schools.

A Wisconsin legislator who opposes the program complains that "choice schools [pick and choose] what children they want" while public schools "cannot turn away anyone."

Such claims are a common part of the school choice debate. They are untrue.

Parental School Choice is Widespread — Unless You're Poor

Wisconsin law requires that private choice schools use a random lottery to admit voucher students. This requirement of non-discrimination is neither required of nor followed by the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). Rather, many MPS schools use admission standards involving student academic ability, special learning needs, and prior behavior.

For example, in elementary and middle school grades, MPS maintains 21 schools with eligibility requirements. Some schools take only students who speak German. Others serve only "academically talented" students. At the high school level, more than one-third of MPS students attend schools with admission criteria that no private school may use for students eligible for a voucher.

In addition, MPS excludes students from many individual schools based on special needs. Most MPS schools do not serve autistic students or students with visual, hearing, or orthopedic impairments. Yet, under the random assignment rules of the choice program, participating schools must accept all eligible students.

MPS also uses a system of "alternative schools," where it assigns truants, adjudicated juveniles, or other students defined as "at risk" of not graduating. MPS uses discipline and behavior records, among other indicators, to place students in these programs. Private schools may use no such criteria in admitting choice-eligible students.

Milwaukee's experience disproves conventional wisdom that voucher programs let private schools "cream" the best students from public schools. Indeed, such practices are more common in current public schools.

baeo

Black Alliance for Educational Options

For more information go to: www.schoolchoiceinfo.org

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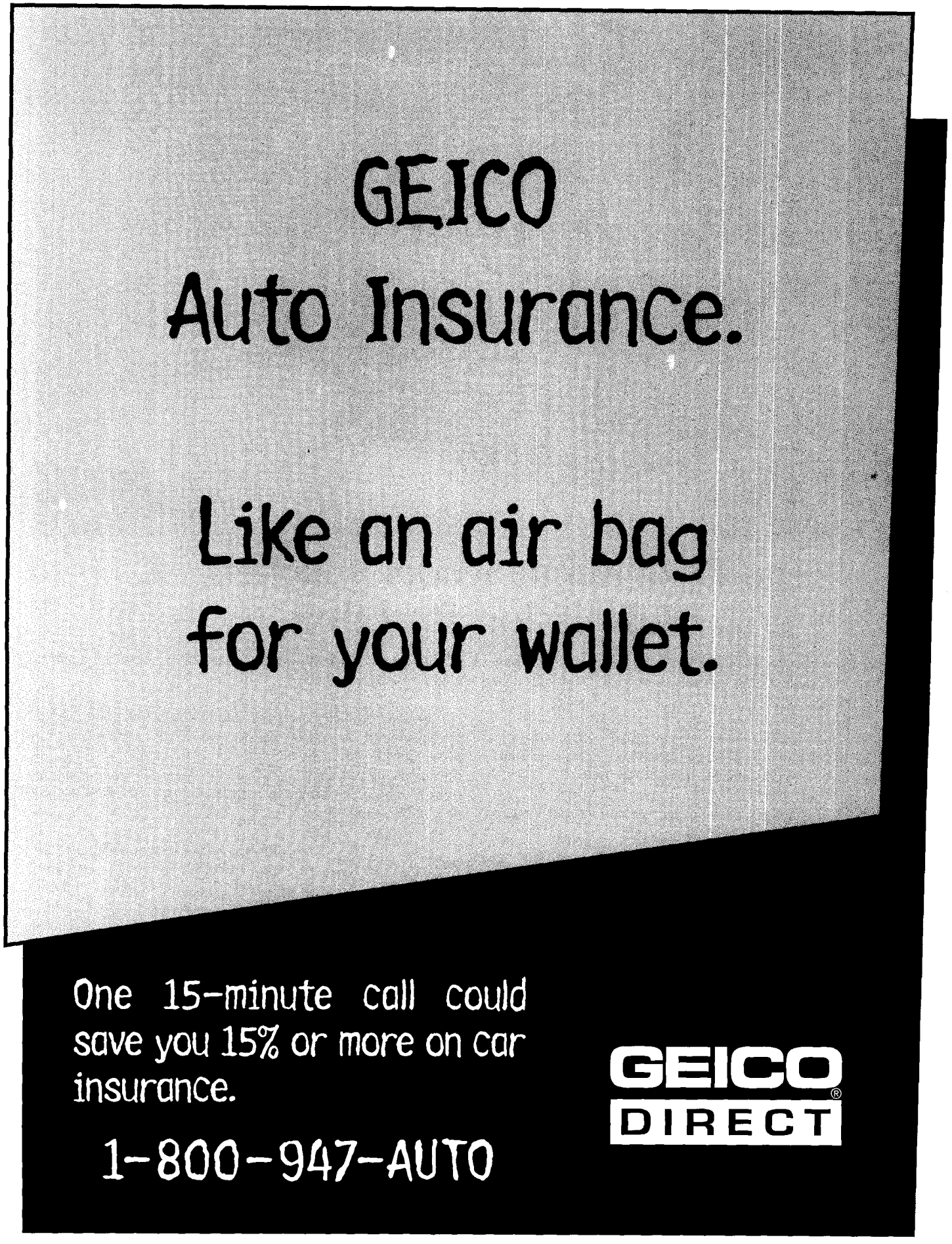

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